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**Utke et al.**

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- (54) **TRACTOR VEHICLE**
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- (\* ) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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- (21) Appl. No.: **12/501,941**
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**B60N 2/02** (2006.01)
- (52) **U.S. Cl.**  
USPC ..... **296/65.02**; 296/65.05
- (58) **Field of Classification Search** ..... 296/65.02,  
296/65.05; 297/313, 316, 325, 326  
See application file for complete search history.

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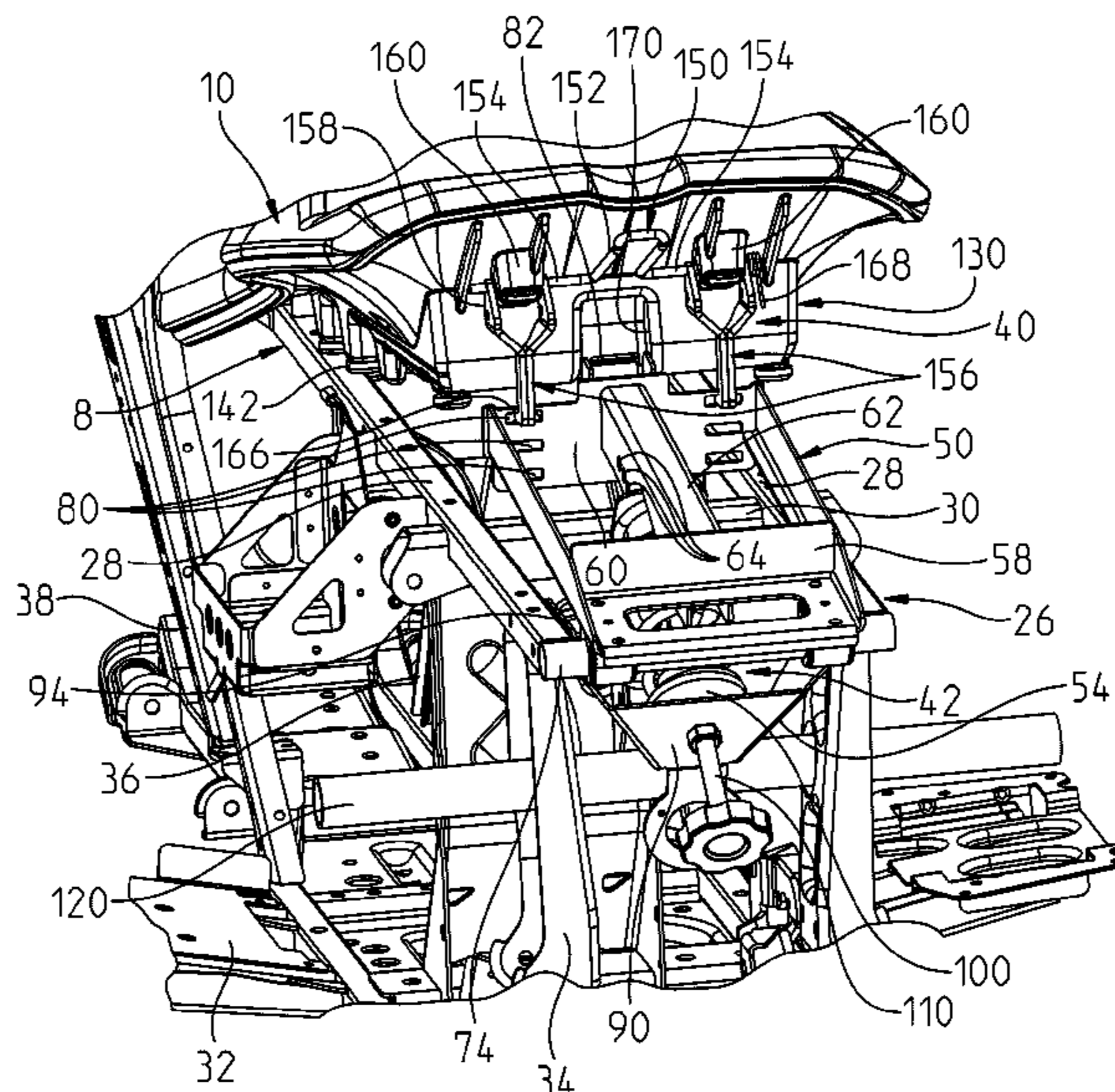
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- (57) **ABSTRACT**

A tractor is disclosed as a four-wheel drive vehicle with a movable seat back, with a seat height adjustment and with a varying load capability. The tractor also has a speed control device.

**29 Claims, 21 Drawing Sheets**



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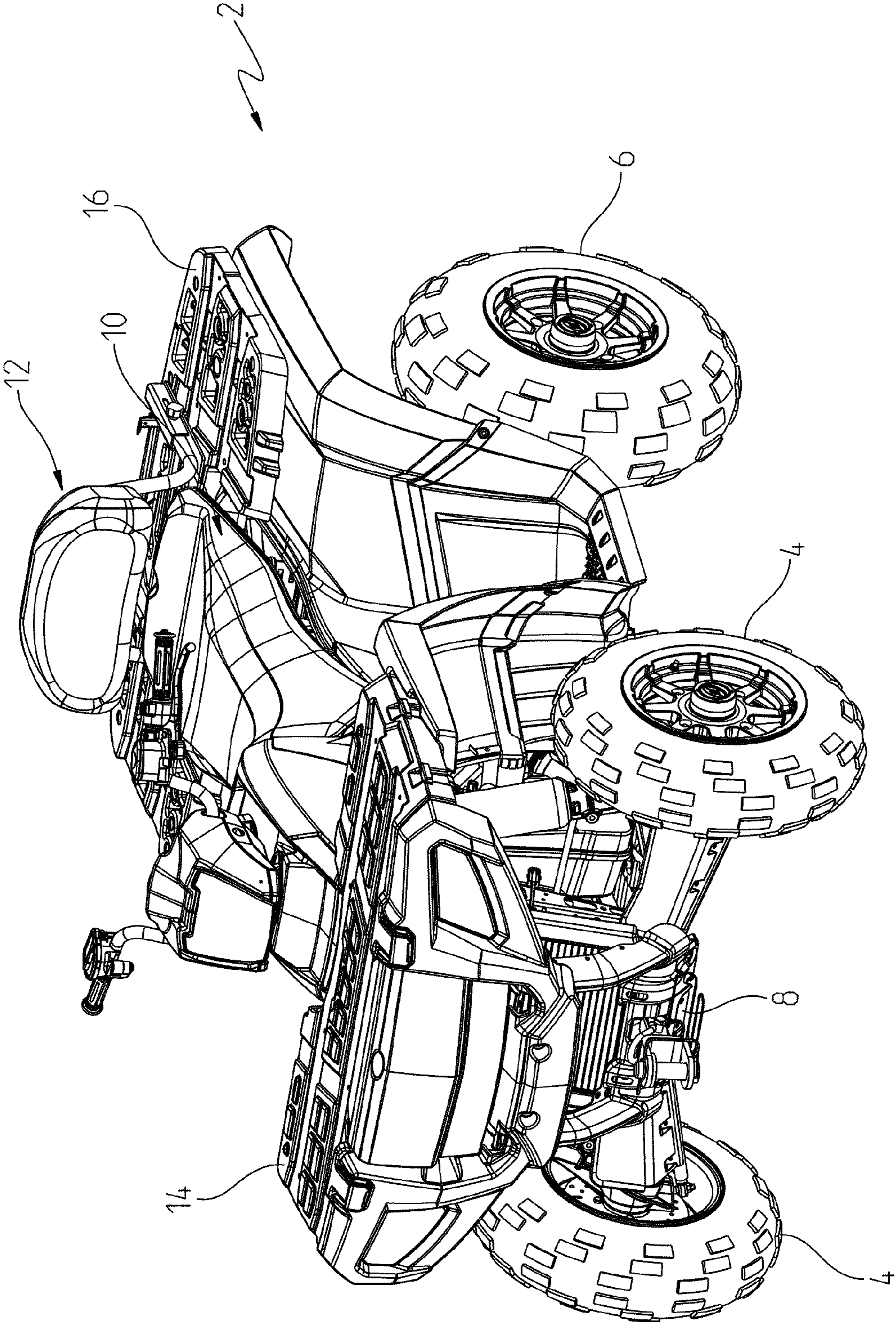


FIG. 1



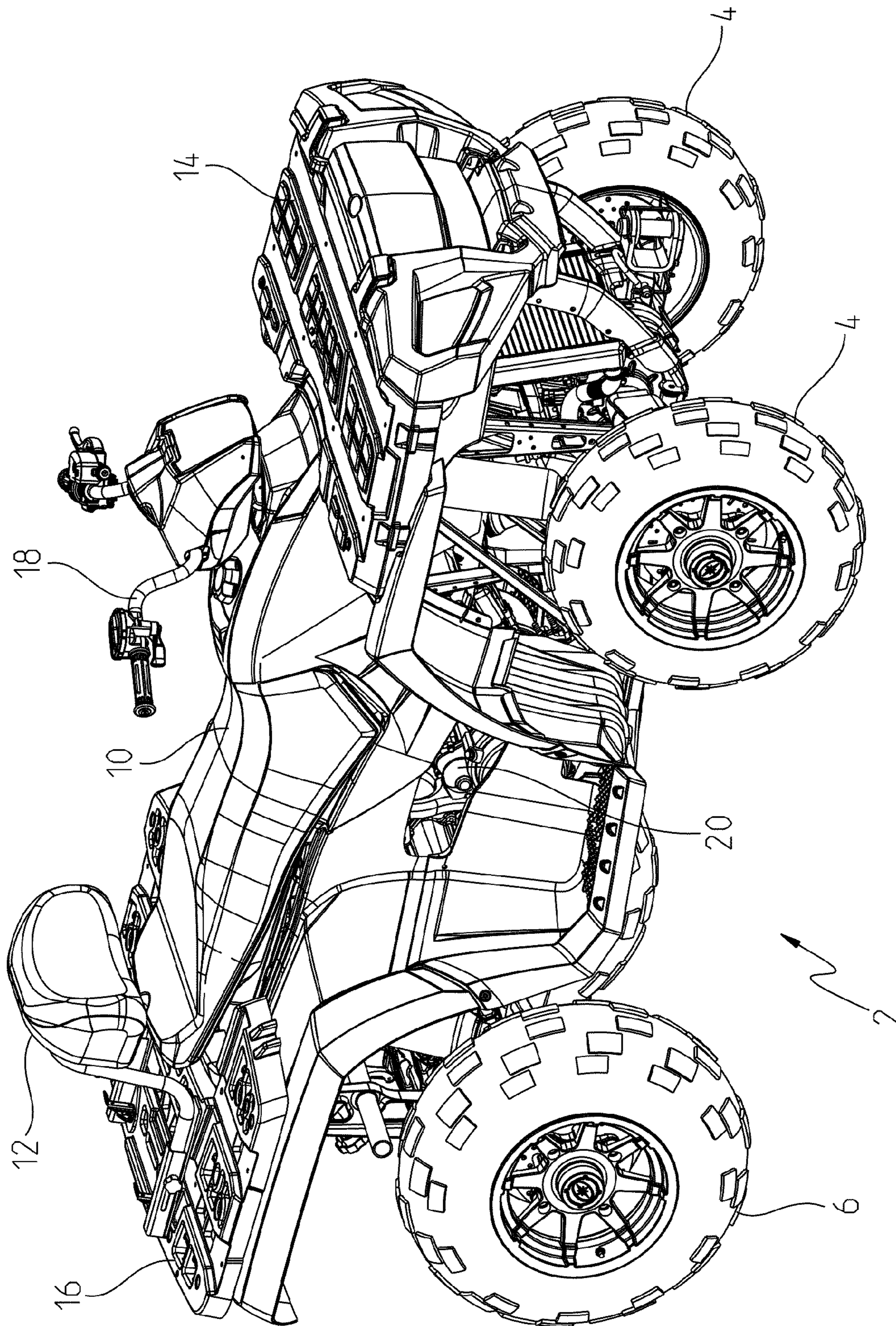


FIG. 2

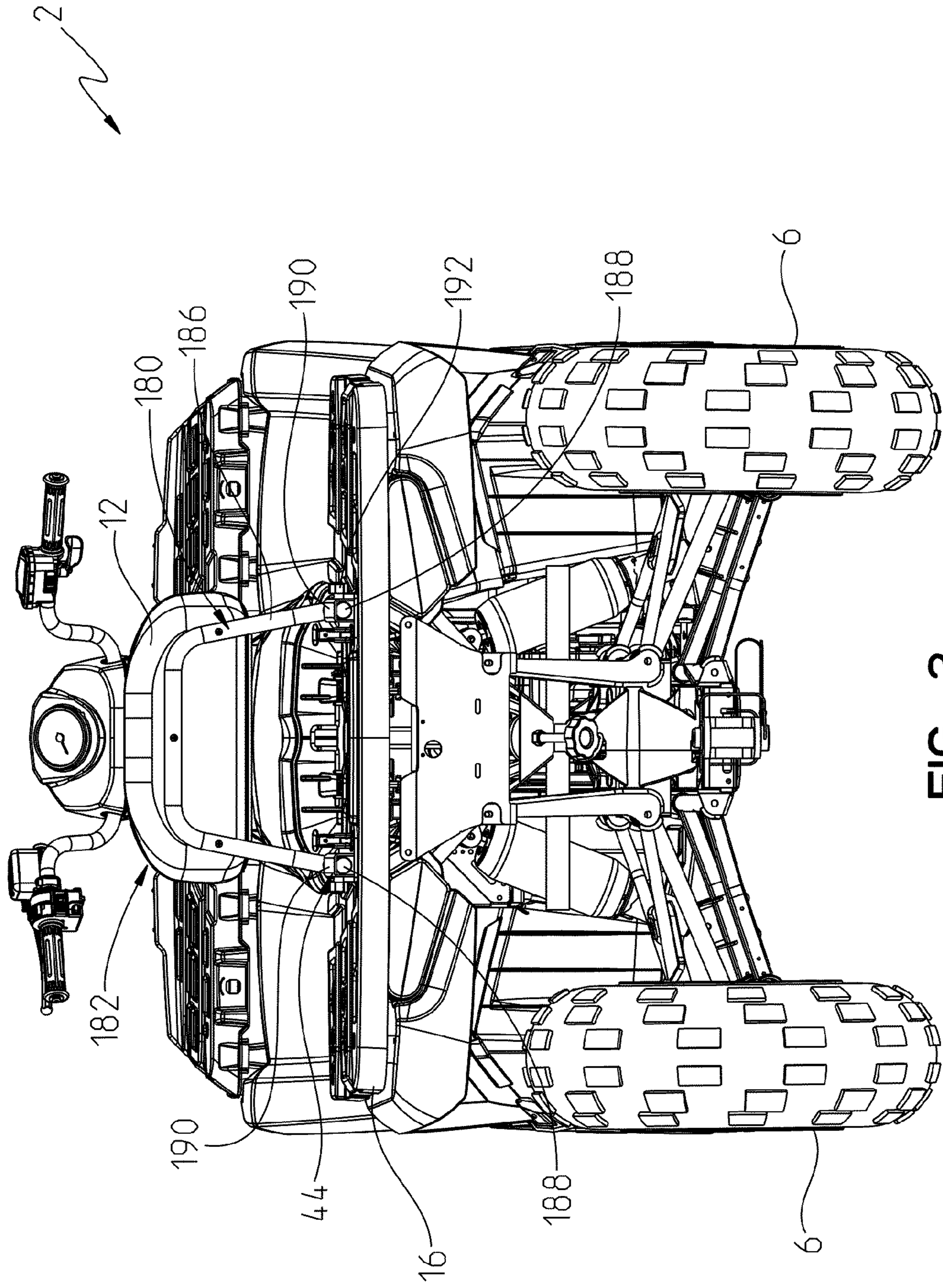


FIG. 3





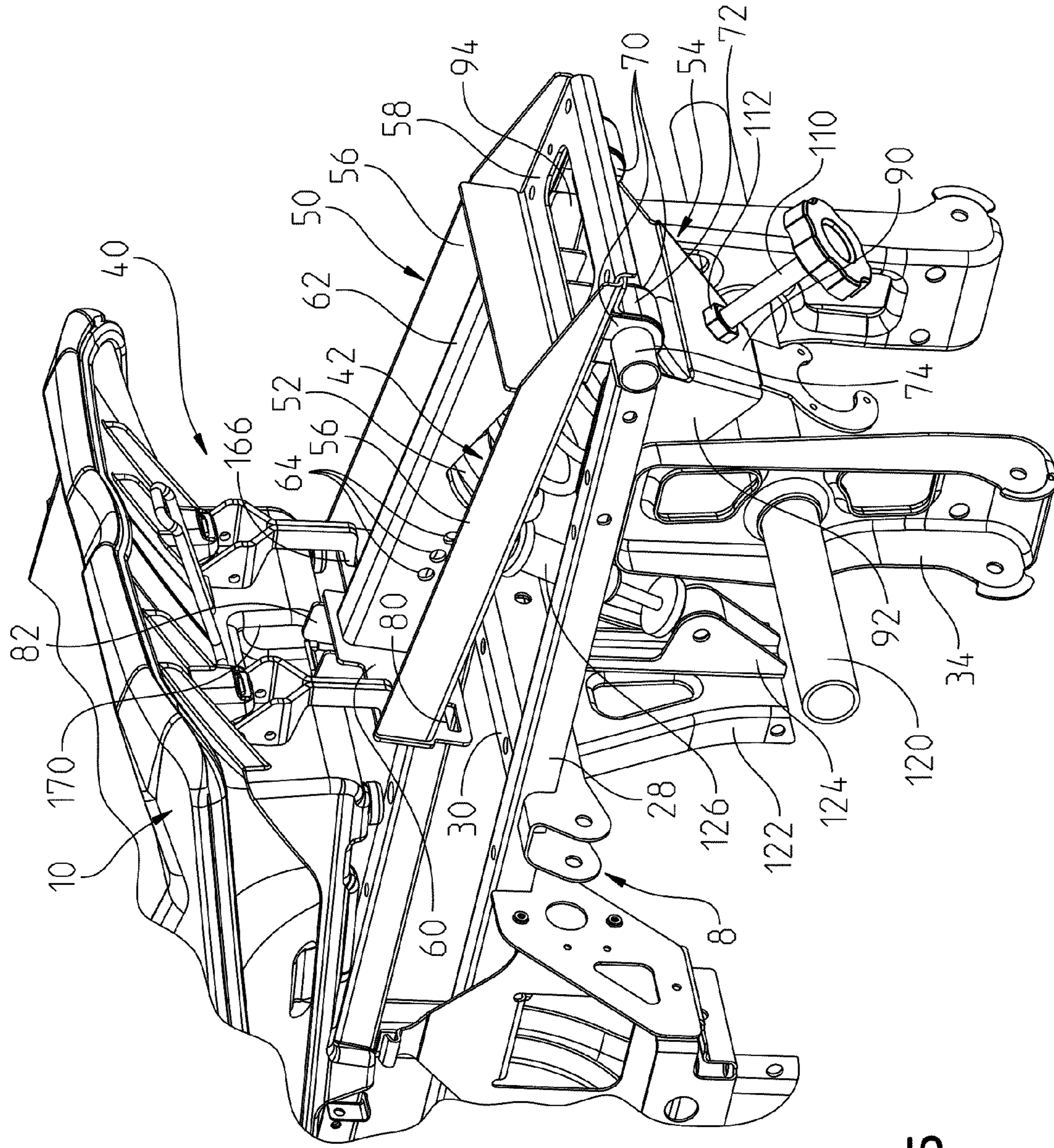


FIG. 5



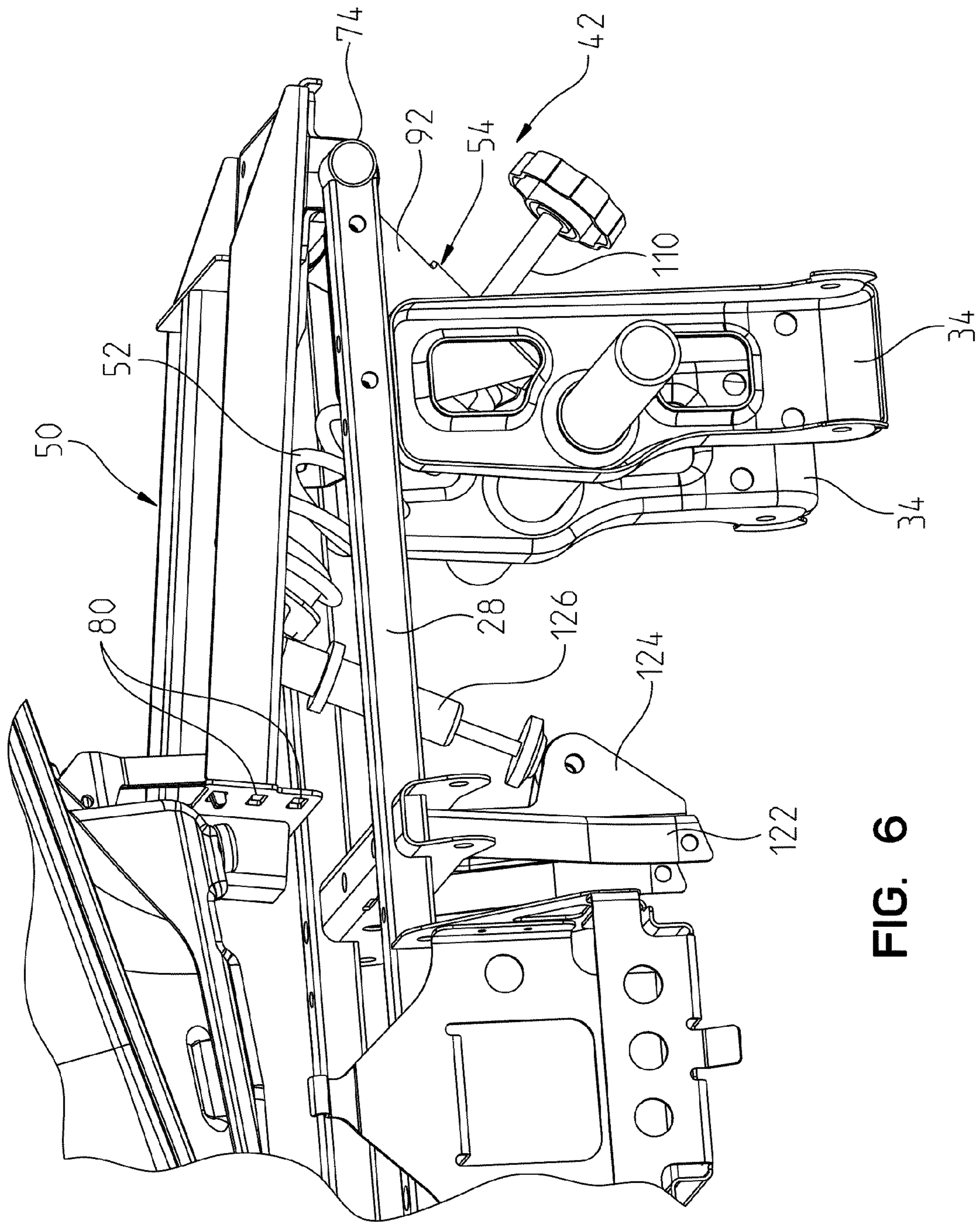


FIG. 6



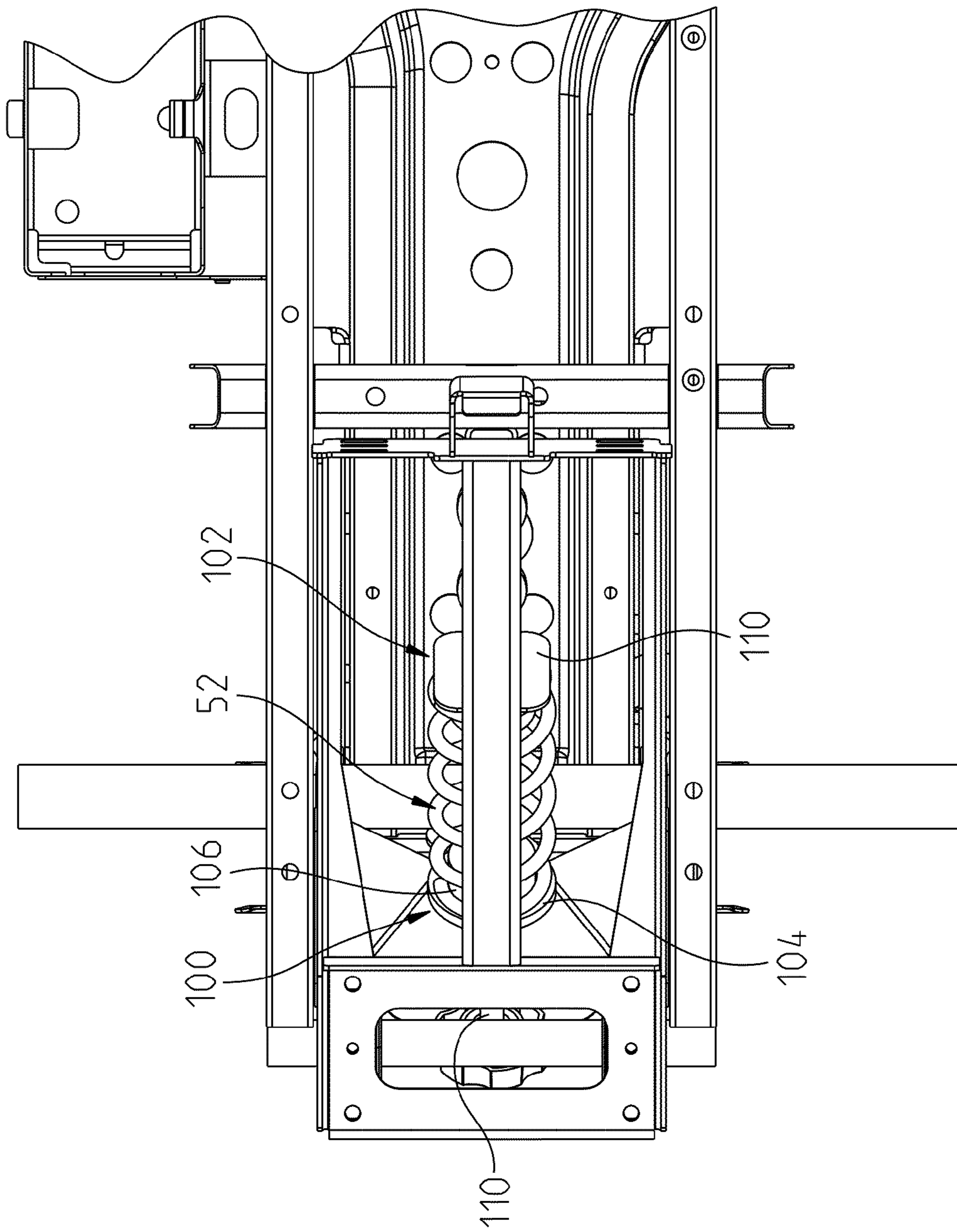


FIG. 7

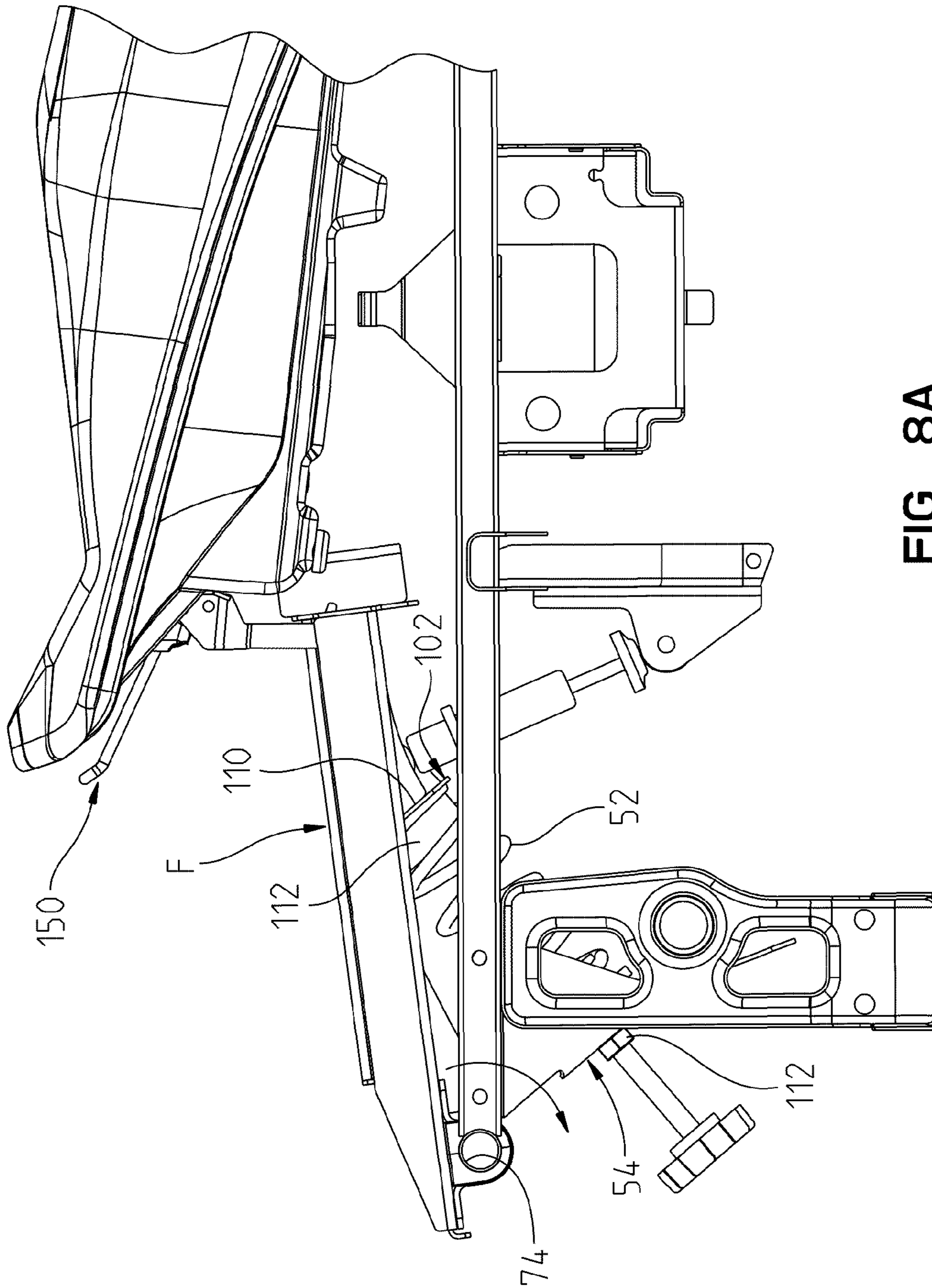


FIG. 8A



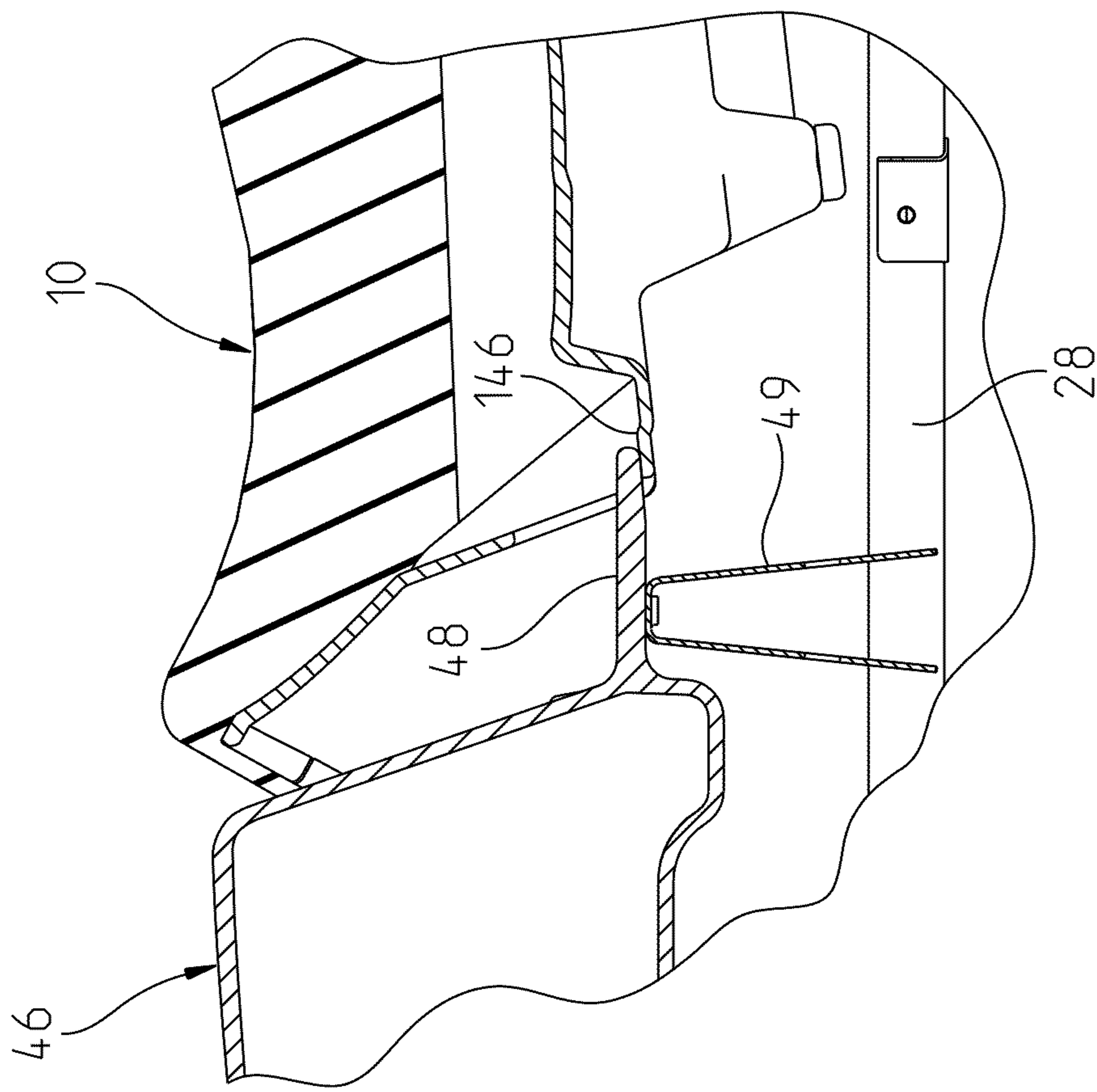
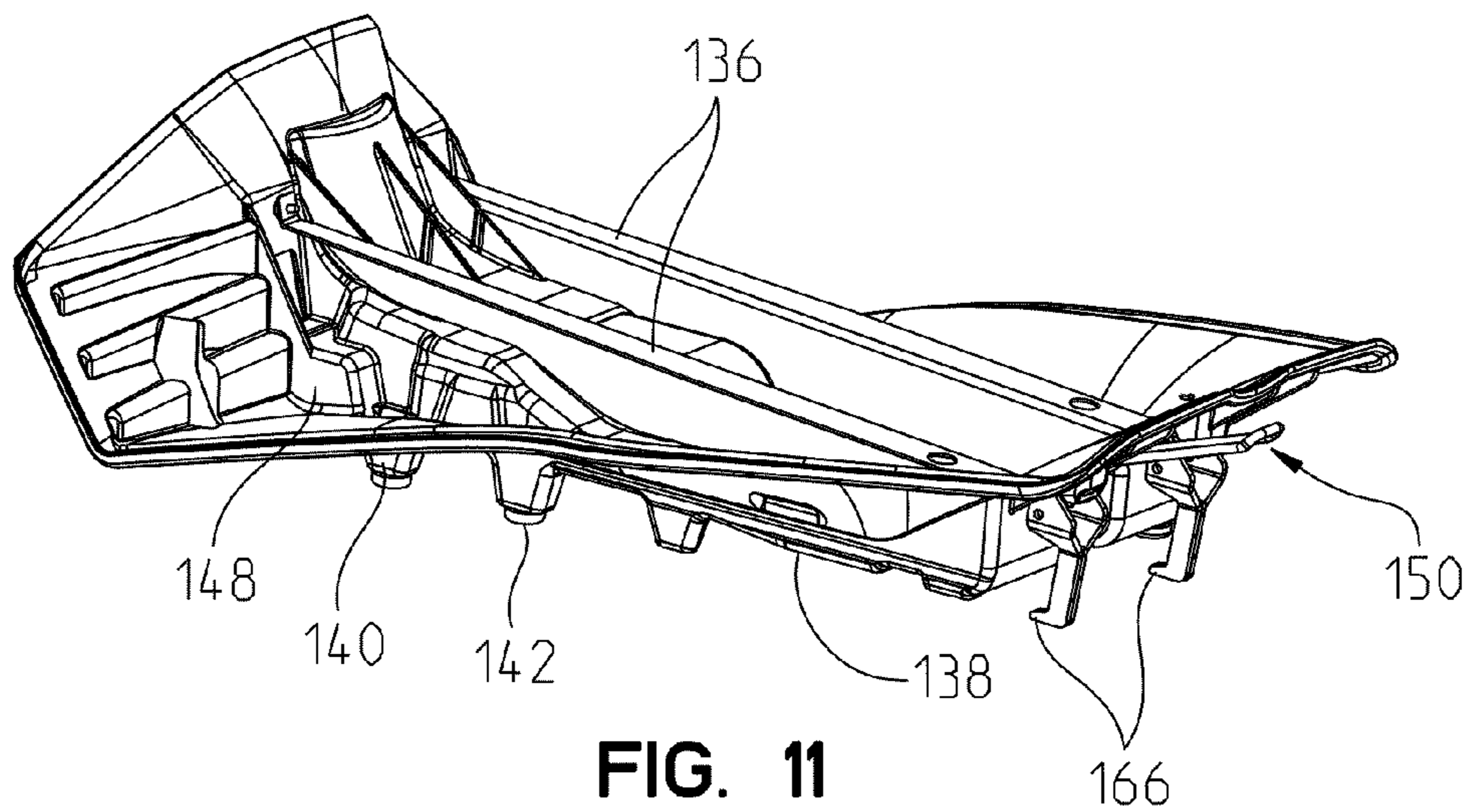
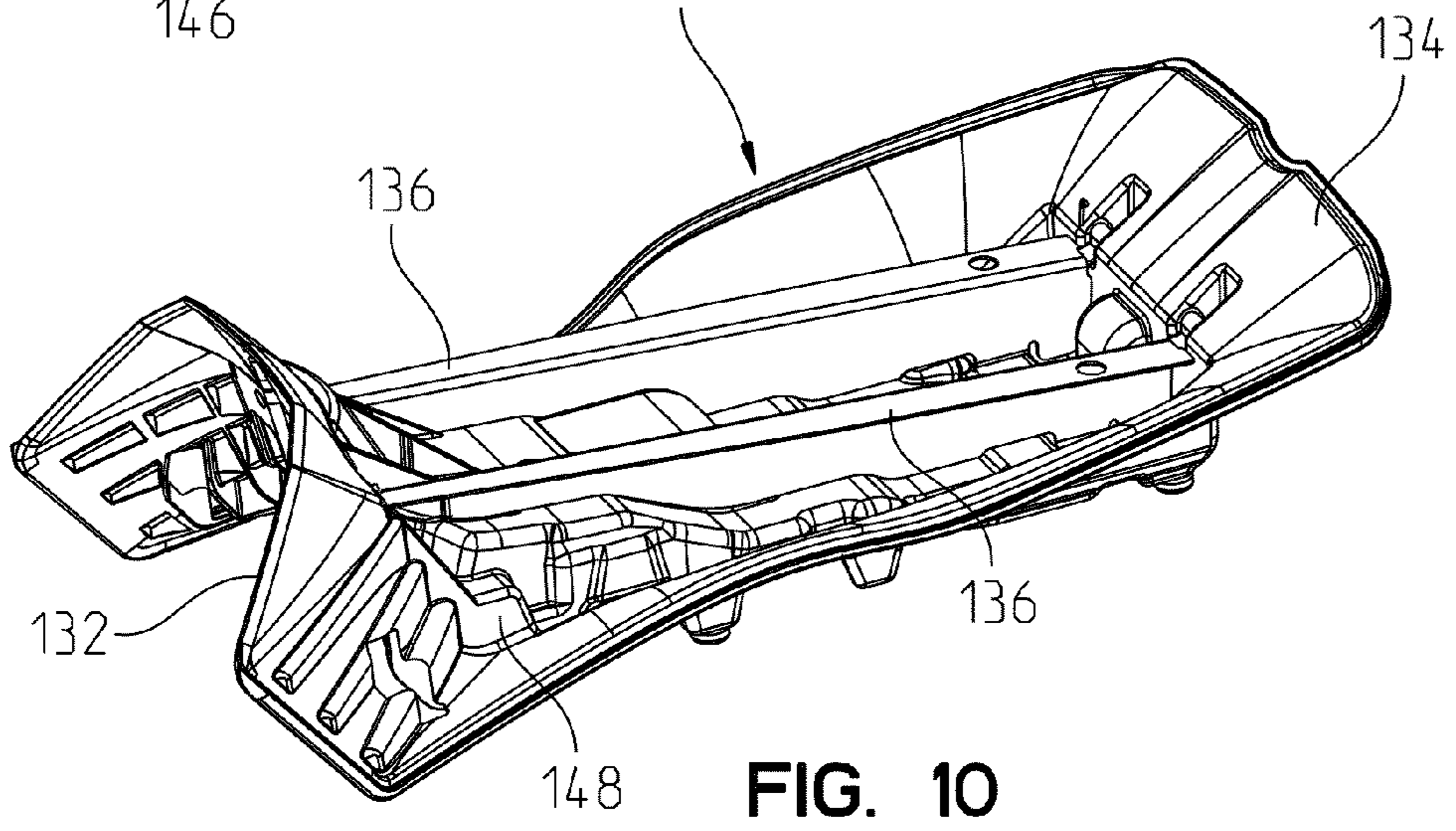
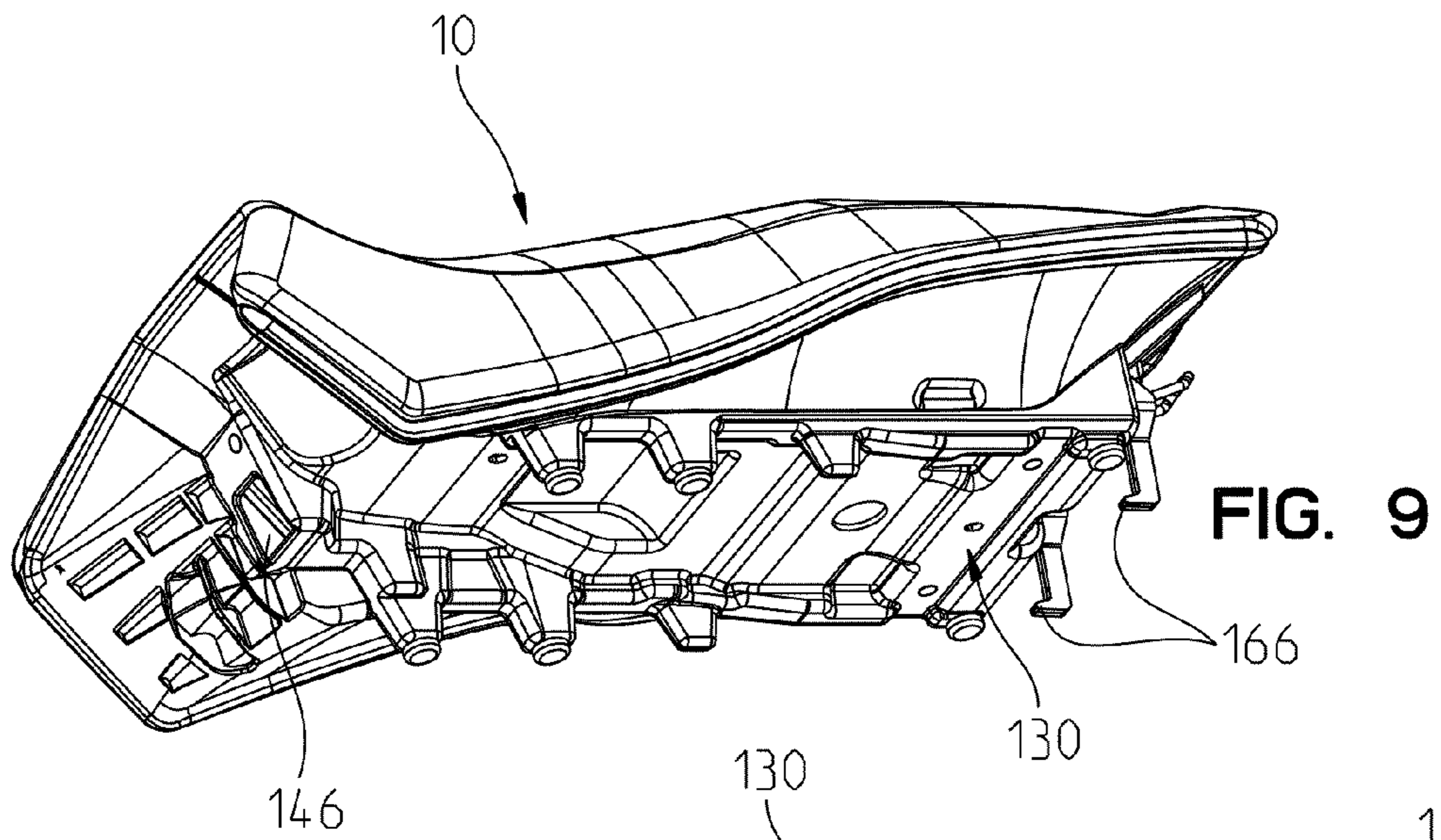


FIG. 8B





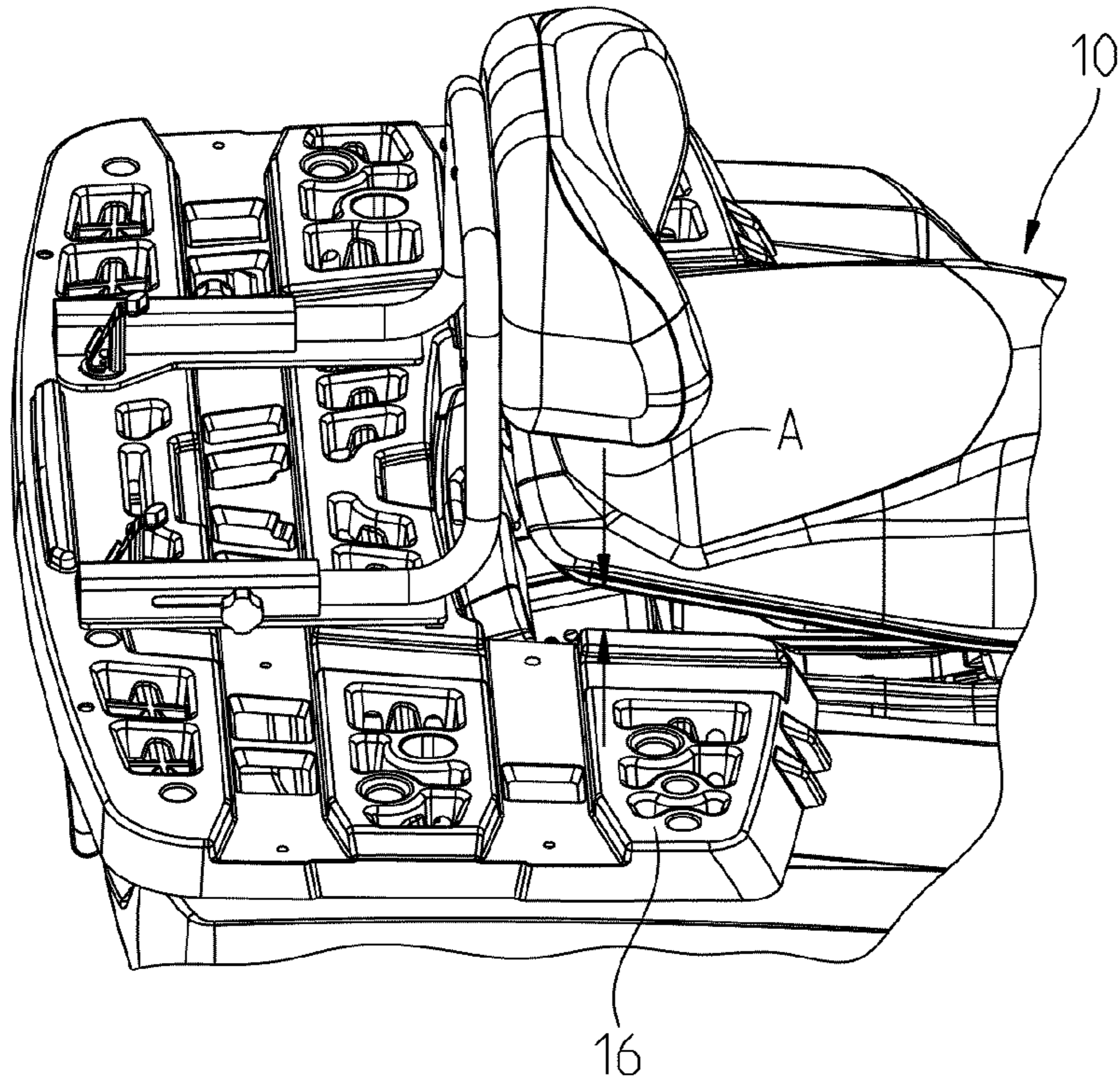


FIG. 12

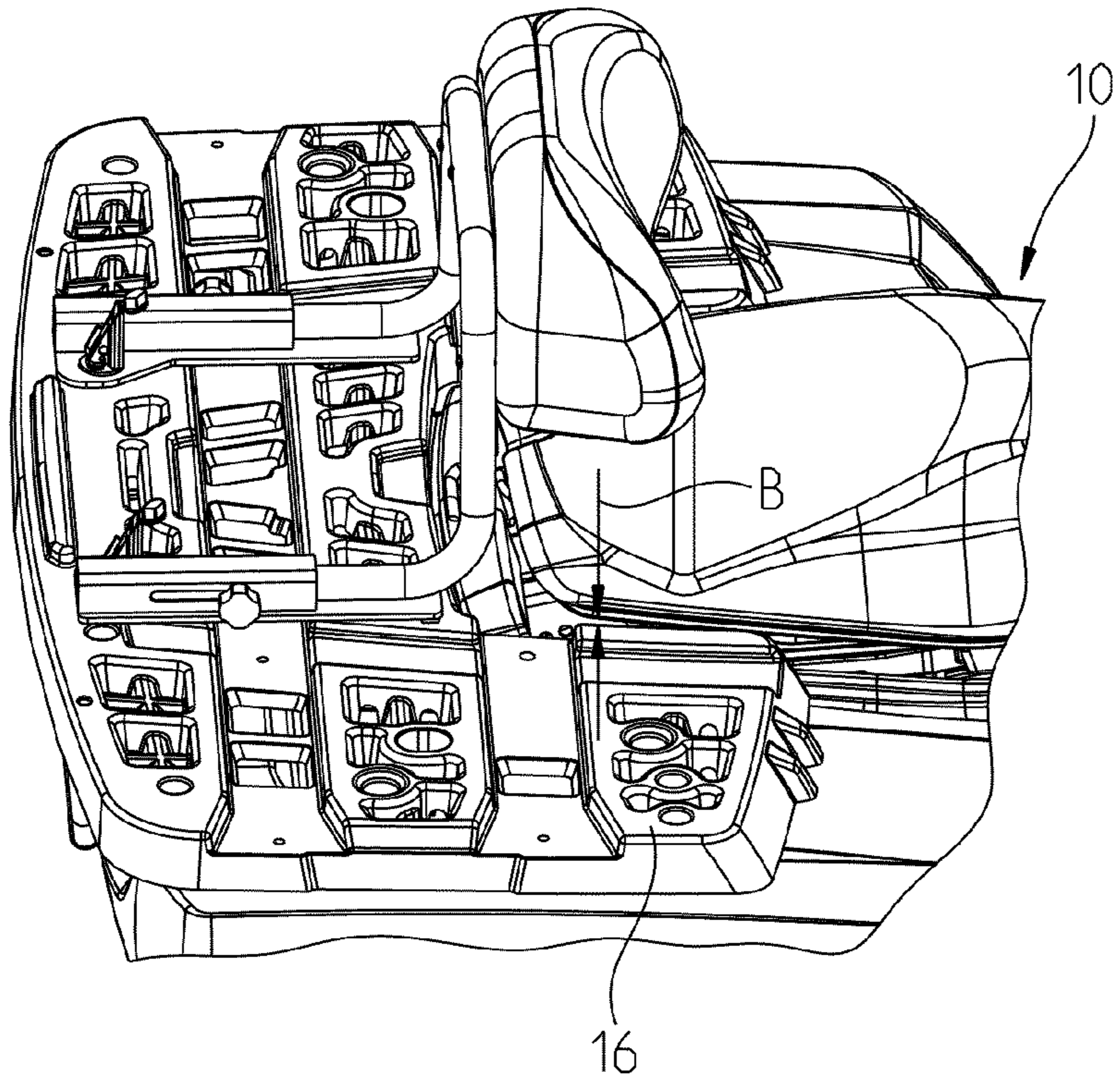


FIG. 13

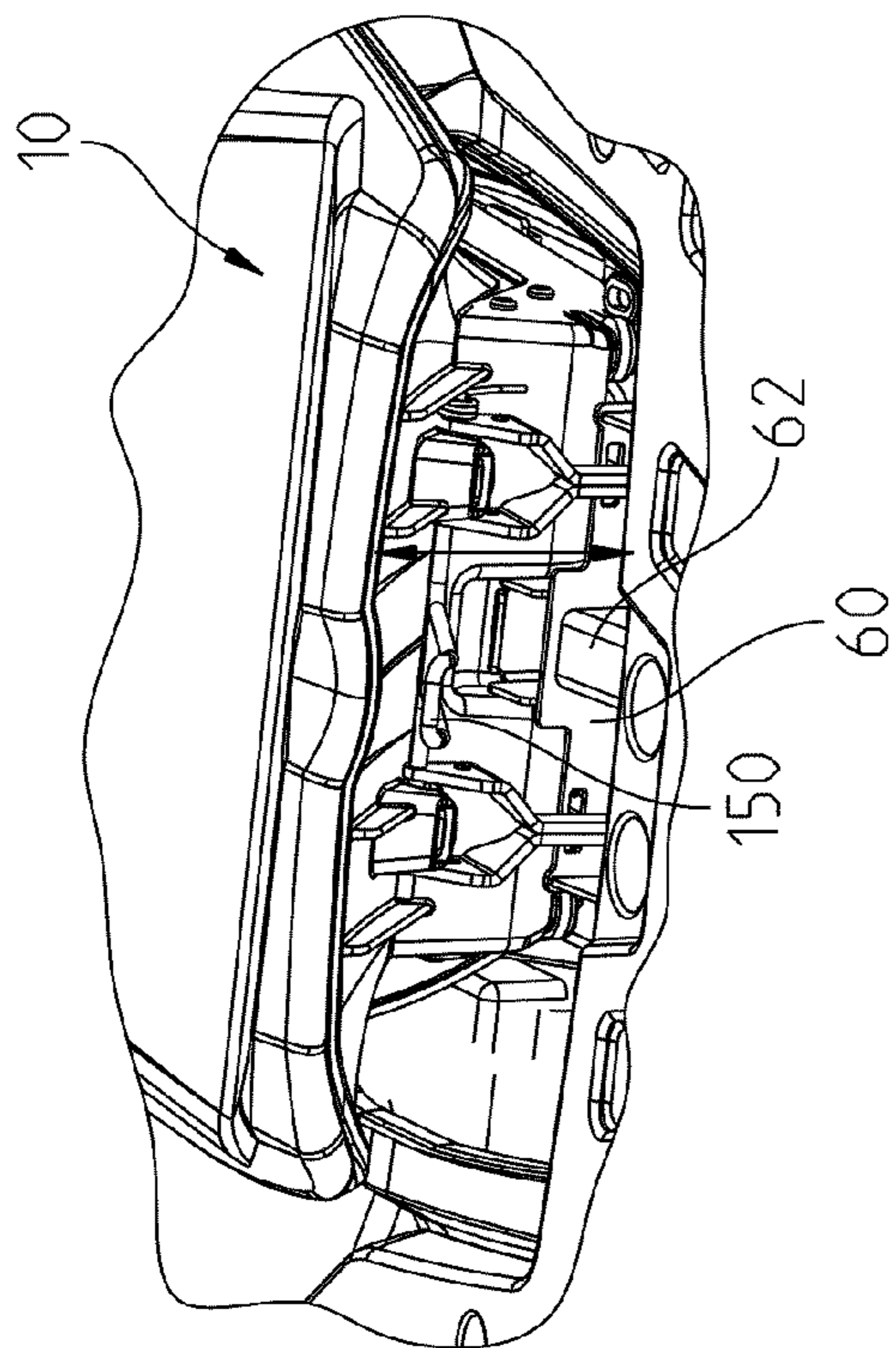


FIG. 15

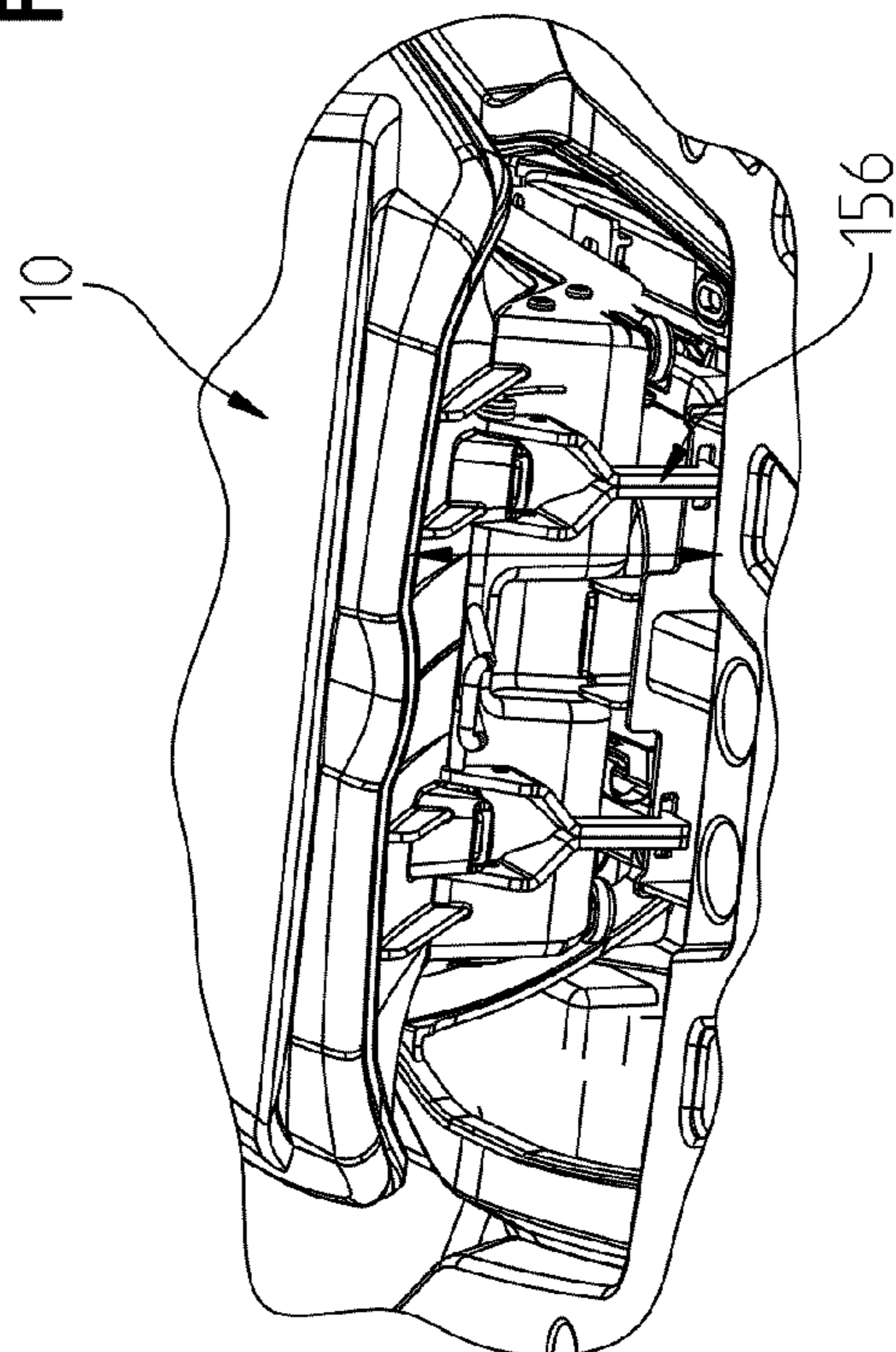


FIG. 14

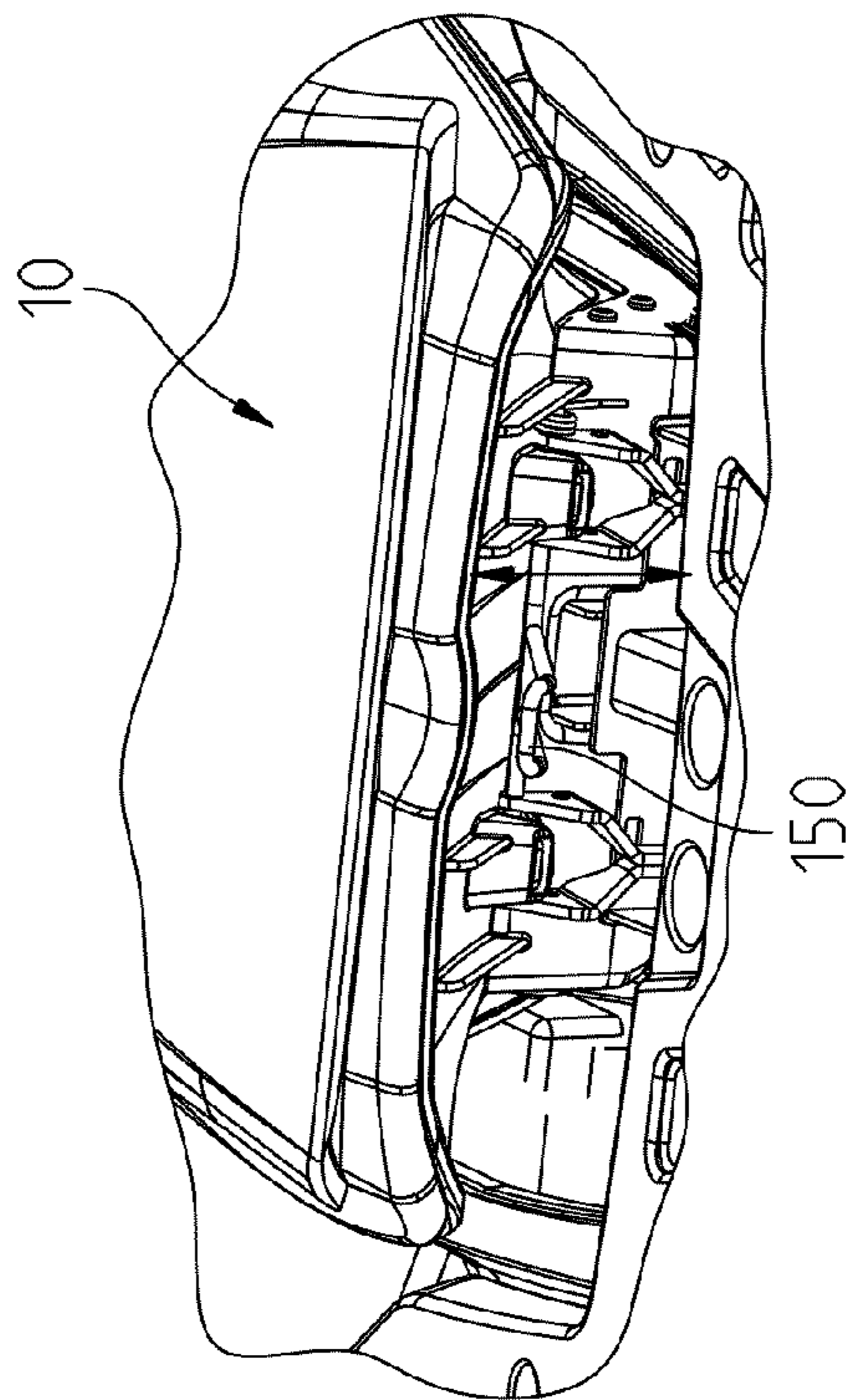


FIG. 16



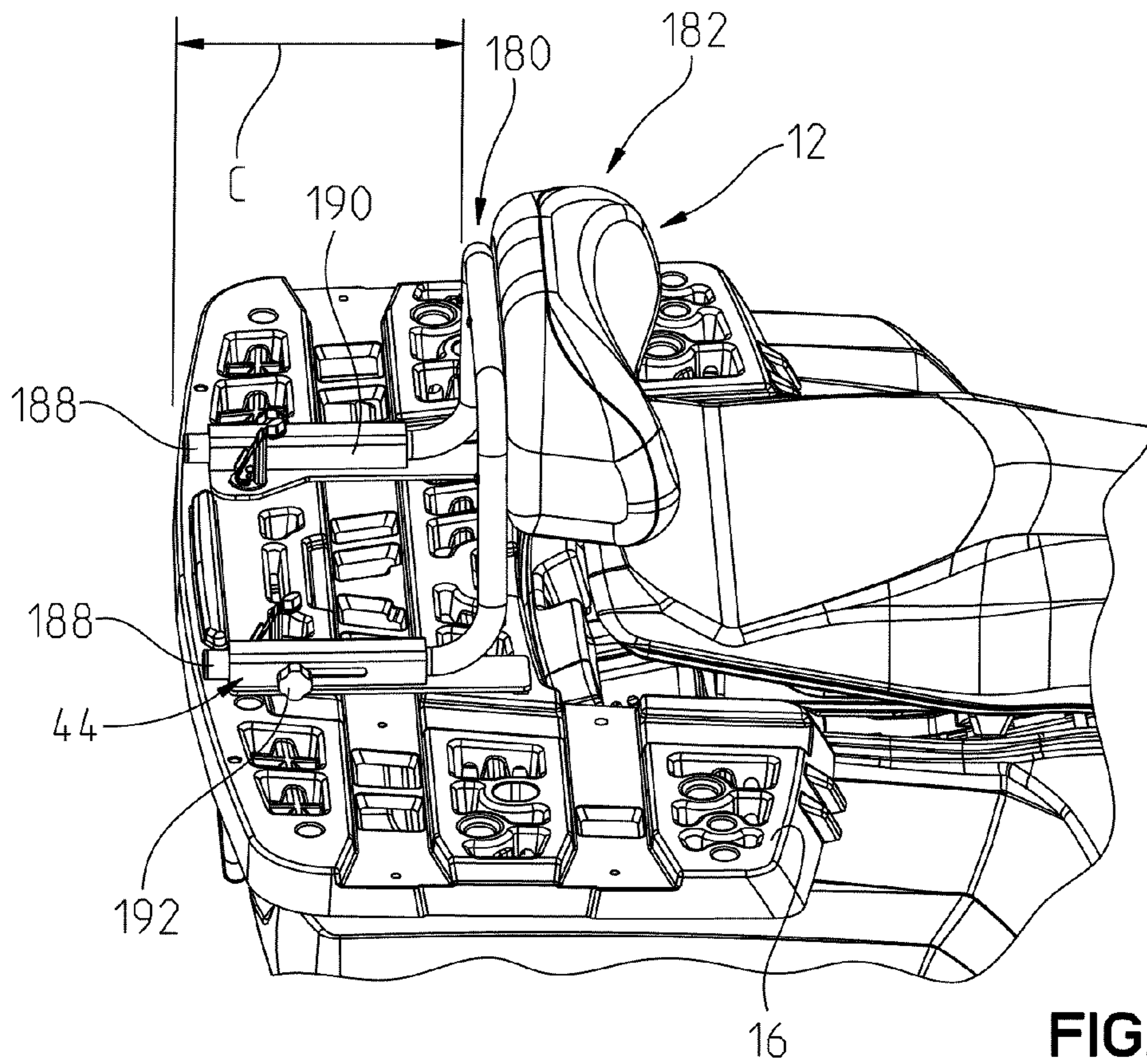


FIG. 17

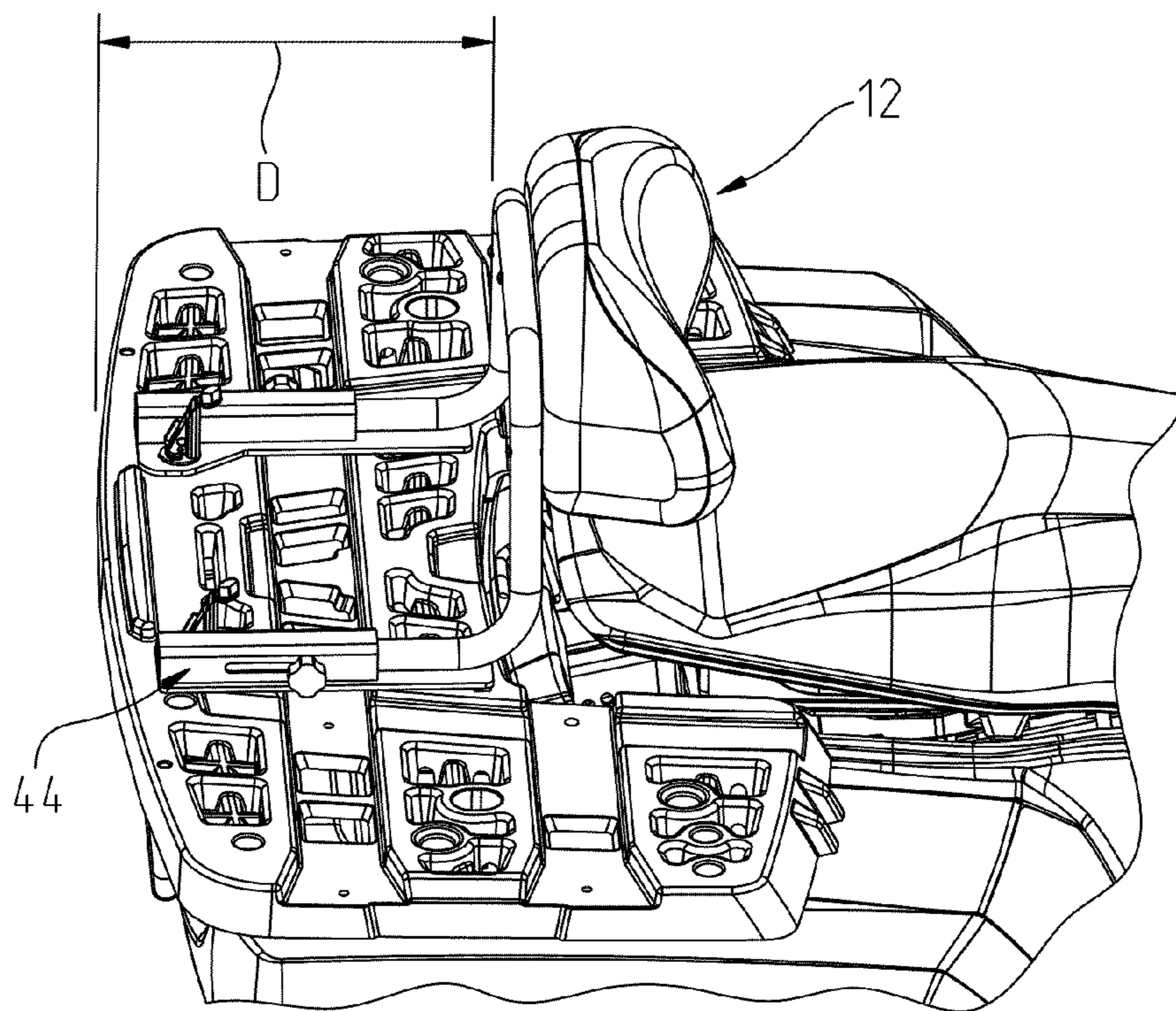


FIG. 18

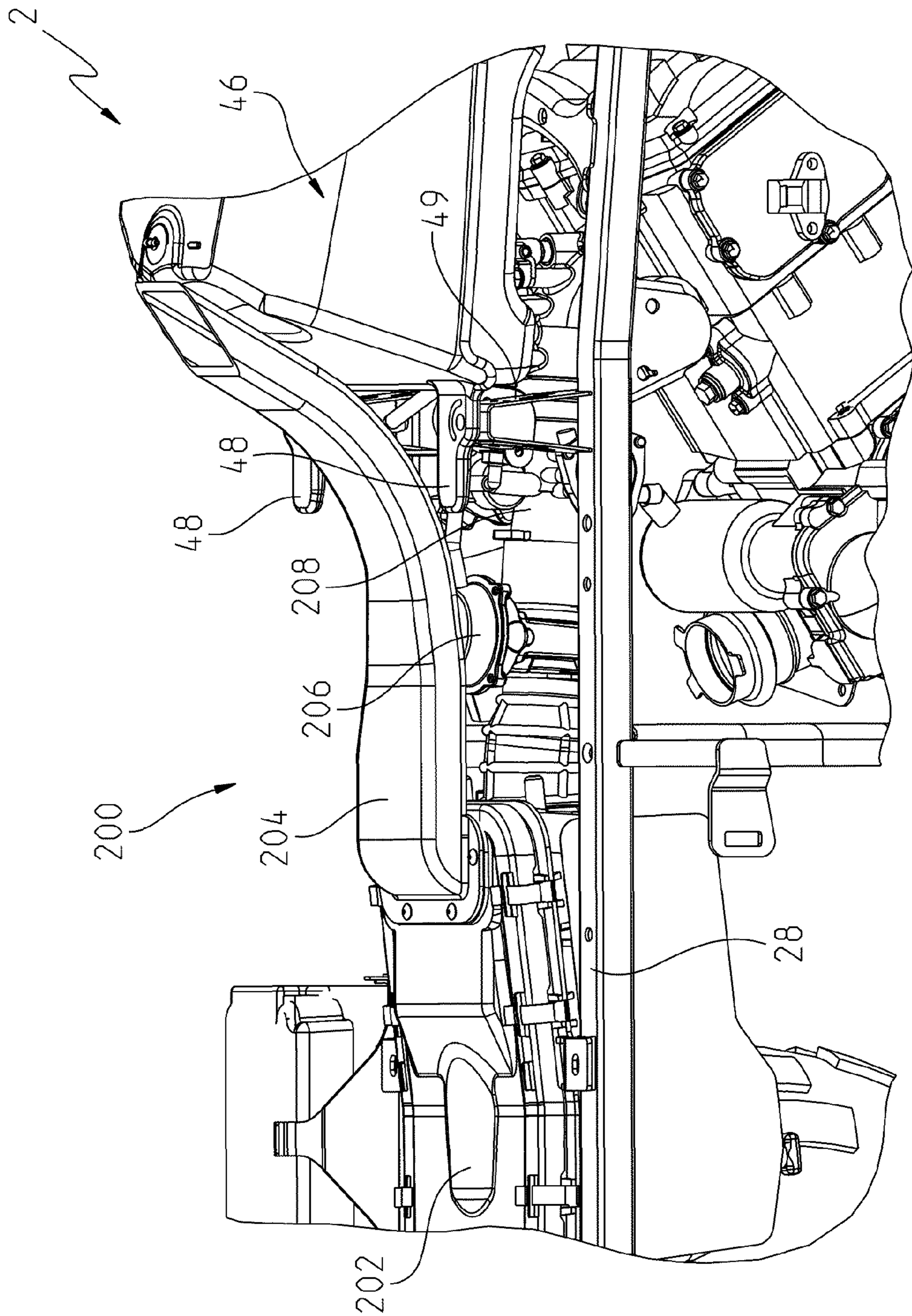


FIG. 19



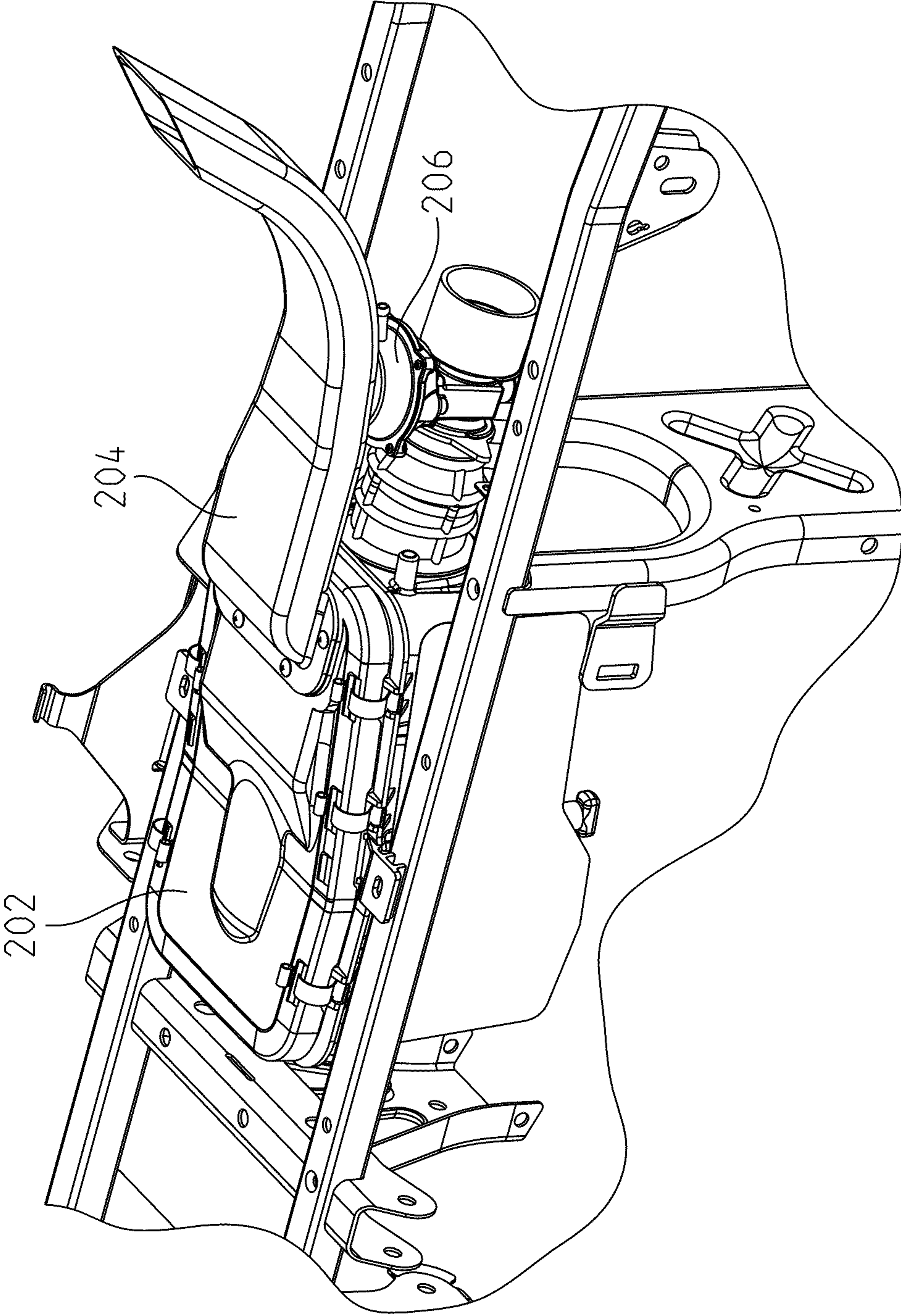


FIG. 20

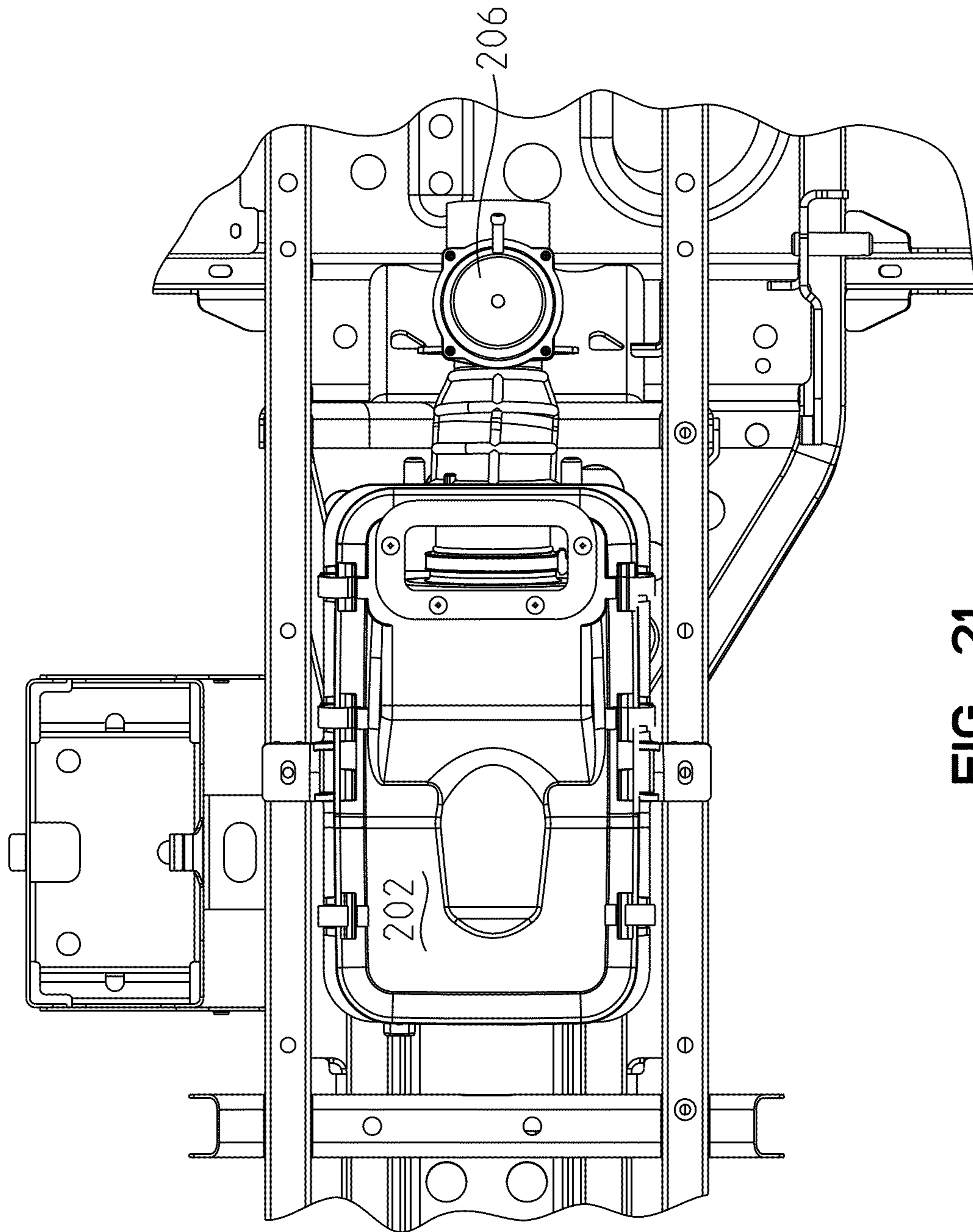


FIG. 21



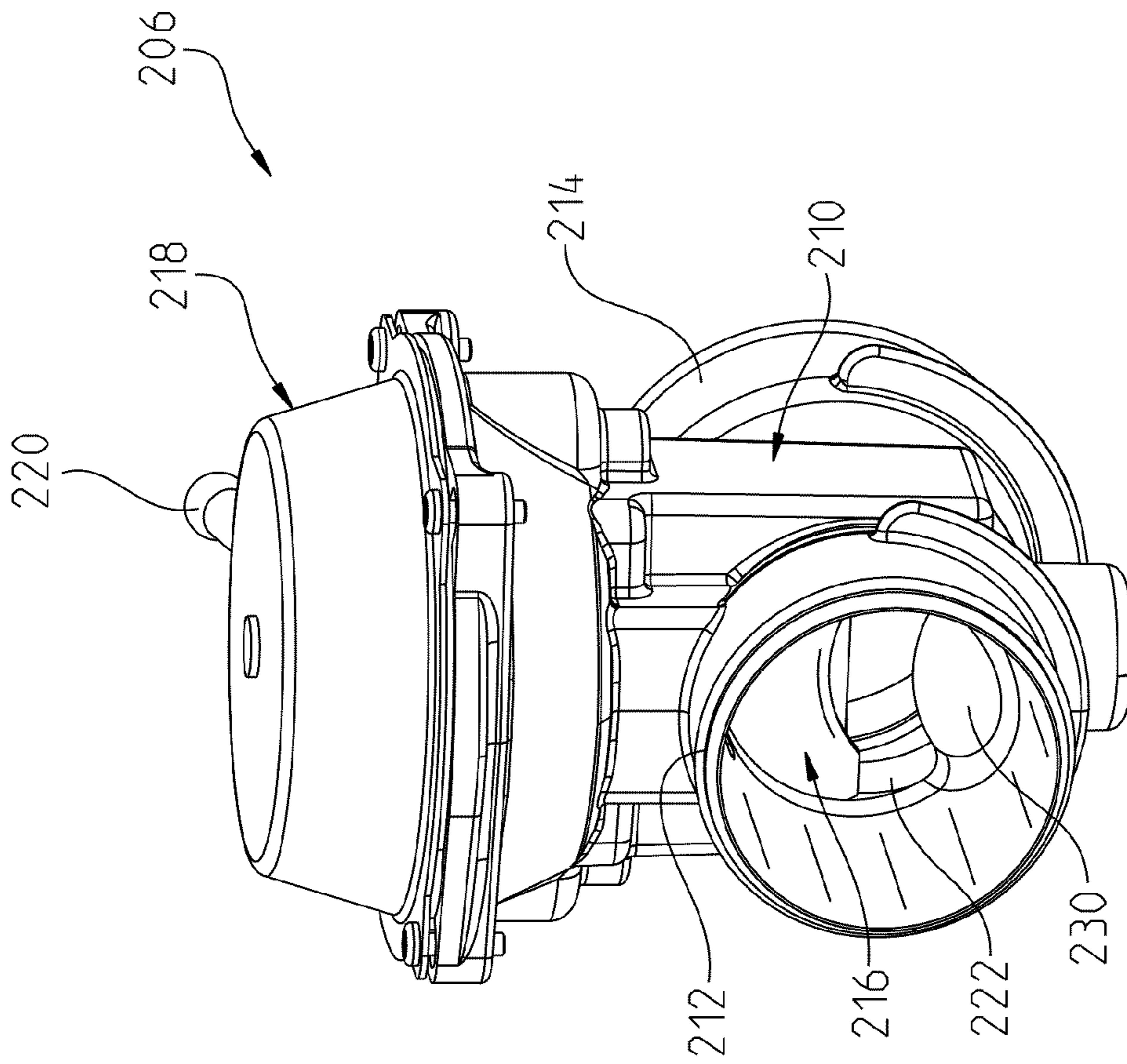


FIG. 22

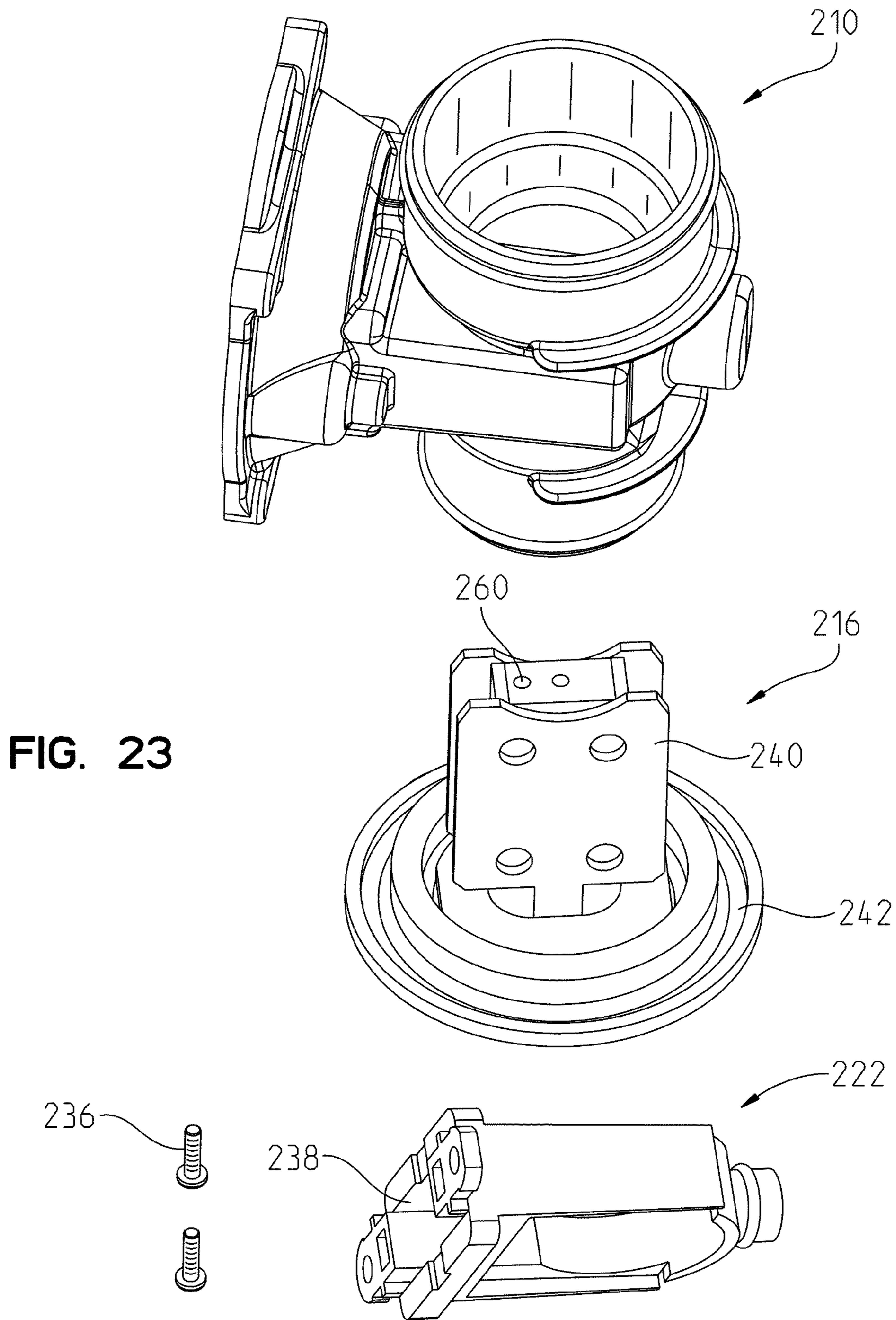
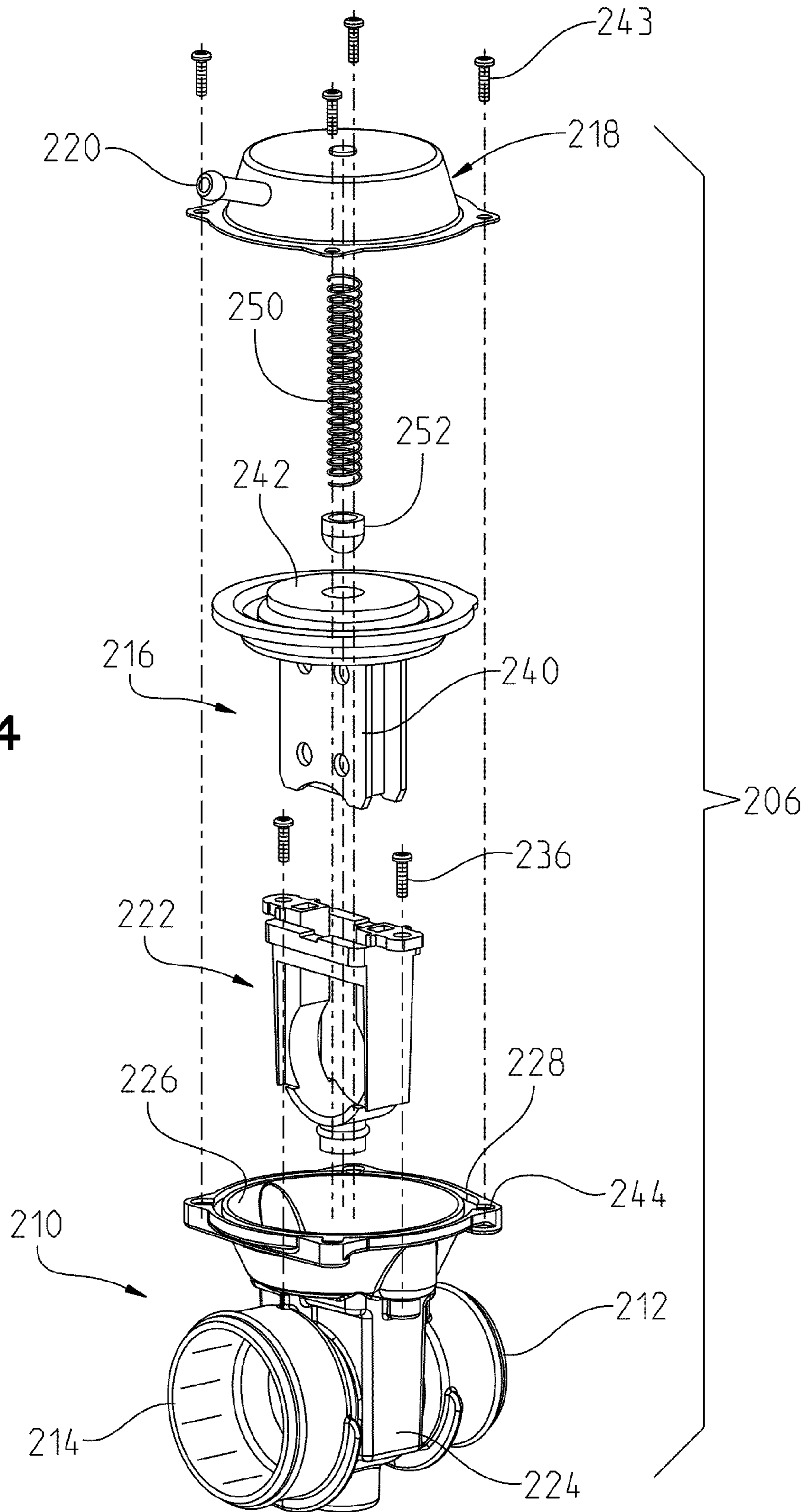




FIG. 24



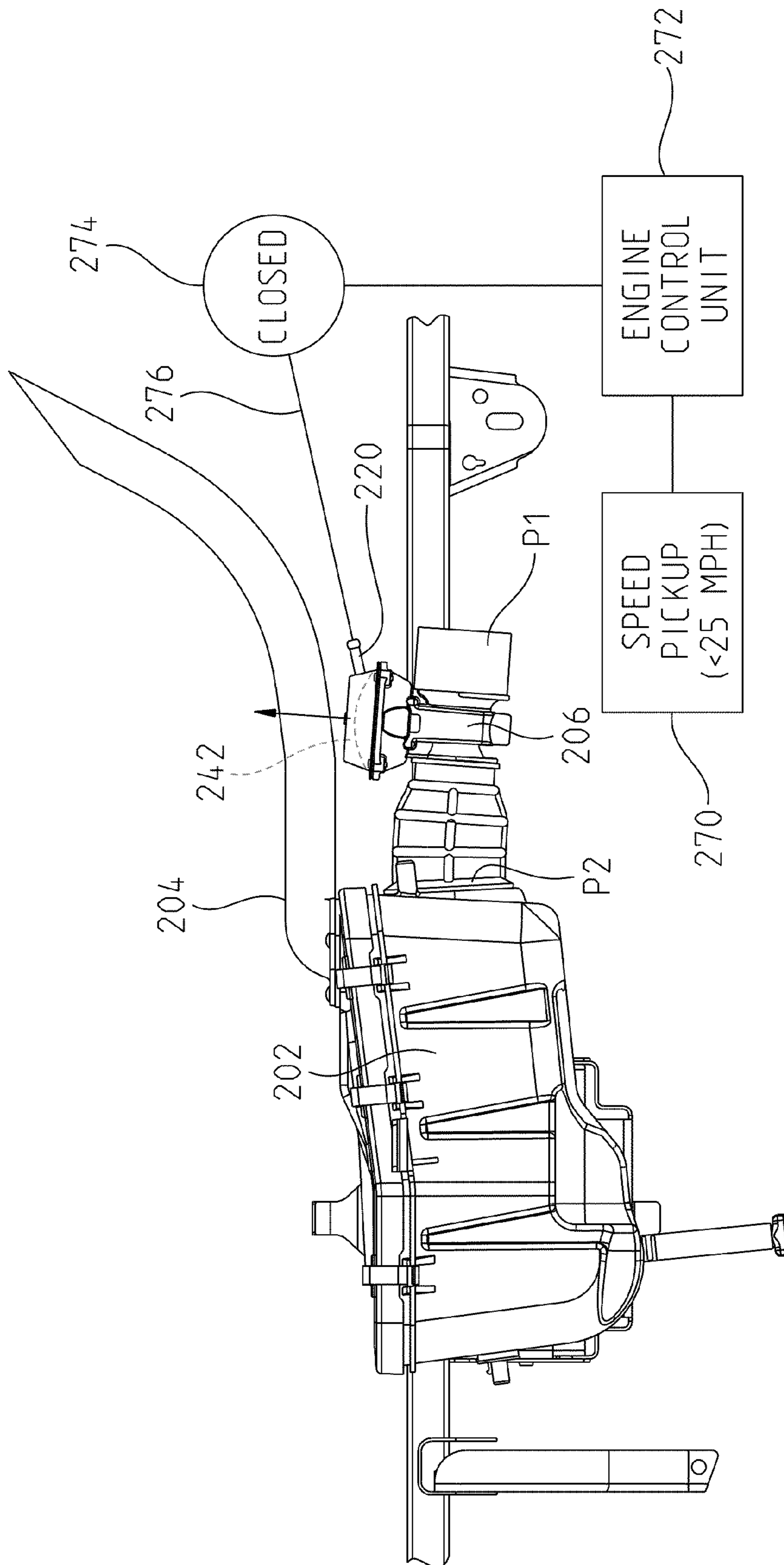


FIG. 25A



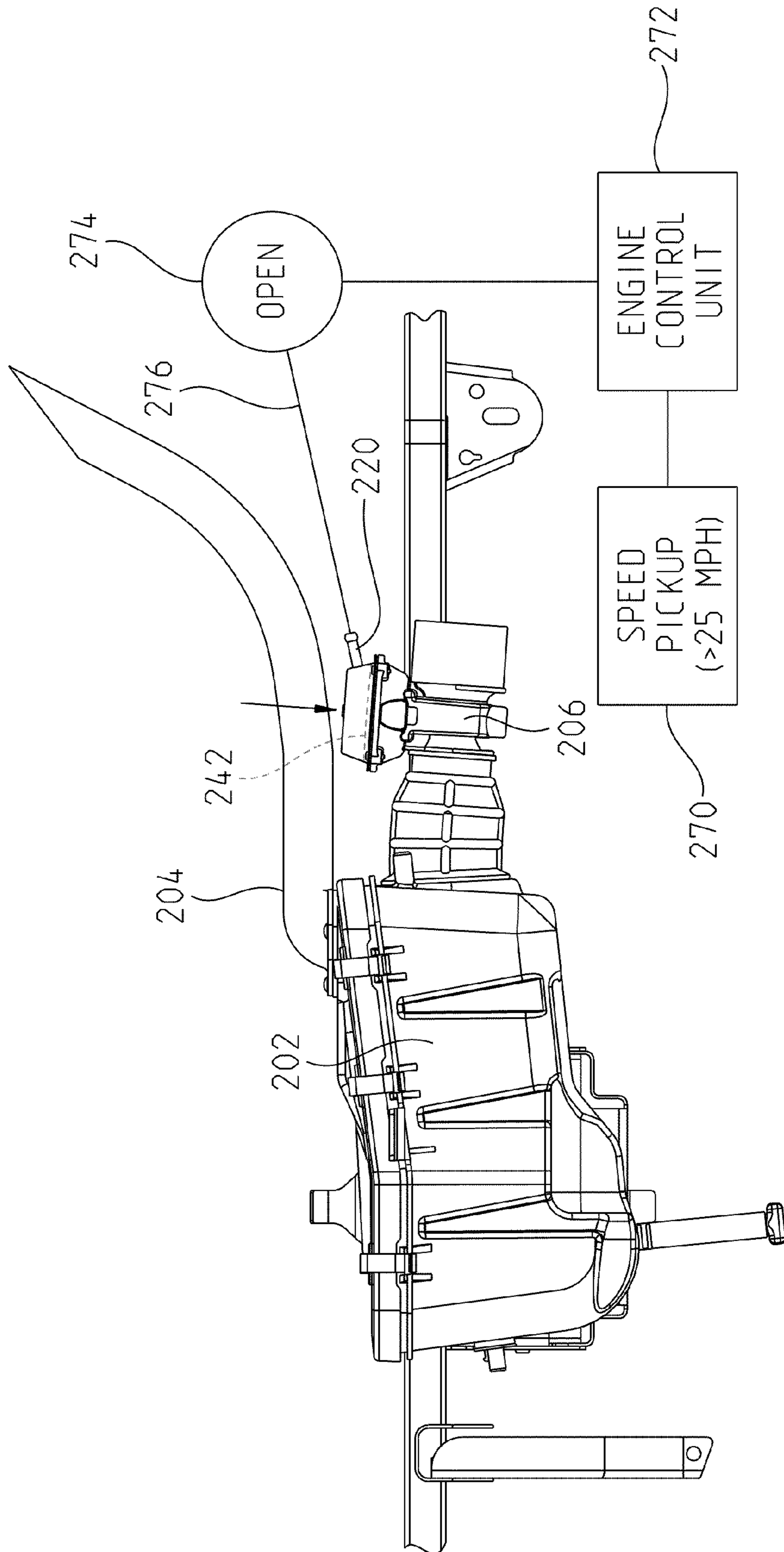


FIG. 25B

## 1

## TRACTOR VEHICLE

## RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional application 61/135,864 filed Jul. 24, 2008, the subject matter of which is incorporated herein by reference.

This application is related to application Ser. No. 12/501,944 co-filed with the present application and entitled "VEHICLE HAVING SPEED CONTROL".

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present disclosure relates to vehicles which may be classified as tractors.

Many different types and styles of vehicles are used for utility purposes, and many different country laws and regulations apply to many applications. Generally, all terrain vehicles ("ATVs") and utility vehicles ("UVs") are used to carry one or two passengers and a small amount of cargo over a variety of terrains. Most ATVs include an engine including between one and three cylinders. Generally, the engine is mounted in the frame of the ATV and most ATVs include a straddle or saddle type seat positioned above the engine. The seats are typically hard mounted to the frame, and do not accommodate multiple rider configurations such as height and weight.

In terms of classification for tractors, each country has a specific requirement for tractor vehicle classification. Europe has the "Council Directive of 25 Jul. 1978 on the approximation of the laws of the member states relating to the driver seat on wheeled agricultural or forestry tractors" described in (78/764/EEC) (OJ L 255, Sep. 18, 1978, Pg. 1), the subject matter of which is incorporated herein by reference.

This Directive requires wheel vehicles to have certain characteristics in order to achieve classification as tractors. First, the position of the backrest must be adjustable (or the seat bottom and the seat back together) a minimum distance of 60 mm. A seat must also be adjustable in the vertical direction by at least 30 mm. The Directive also requires that the seat be able to follow a specific load adjustment range of between 385 Newtons (86 pounds) and 923 Newtons (207 pounds) as shown in Appendix II of the above-mentioned Council Directive.

It is an object to provide a vehicle of the ATV style, yet comply with the tractor classification.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a left front perspective view of a tractor of the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 is a right rear perspective view of a tractor of the present disclosure;

FIG. 3 is rear view of the tractor;

FIG. 4 is a rear perspective view of the tractor frame showing the seat load compensation assembly and the seat height adjustment assembly;

FIG. 5 is a rear perspective view similar to that of FIG. 4;

FIG. 6 is a left side perspective view similar to that of FIGS. 4 and 5;

FIG. 7 is a top view of the tractor frame shown in FIG. 6;

FIG. 8A is a right side view of the tractor shown in FIG. 6;

FIG. 8B is a cross-section view through the vehicle gas tank and seat;

FIG. 9 is a lower perspective view of the seat;

FIG. 10 shows a top perspective view of the seat frame;

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FIG. 11 shows a rear perspective view of the seat frame of FIG. 10;

FIG. 12 shows a partially fragmented perspective view of the seat in the fully raised position;

FIG. 13 shows the seat of FIG. 12 in the fully lowered position;

FIG. 14 shows an end view looking towards the seat height adjustment assembly with the locking pawl in the uppermost locking aperture;

FIG. 15 shows a view similar to that of FIG. 14 with the locking pawl in the middle locking aperture;

FIG. 16 shows a view similar to that of FIG. 14 with the locking pawl in the lowest locking aperture;

FIG. 17 is a perspective view showing the seat back in the rearward most position;

FIG. 18 is a perspective view showing the seat back in the forward most position;

FIG. 19 is a perspective view showing the air intake system, and a speed control unit mounted to the throttle valve;

FIG. 20 is a perspective view similar to that of FIG. 19 without the engine and throttle valve in place;

FIG. 21 is a top view of the tractor similar to that shown in FIG. 20;

FIG. 22 is a perspective view of the valve of the speed control unit;

FIG. 23 is a view showing multiple component parts of the speed control unit;

FIG. 24 is an exploded view of the speed control unit;

FIG. 25A shows the system operations when the speed is less than 25 mph;

FIG. 25B shows the system operations when the speed is greater than 25 mph;

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENT

With reference first to FIGS. 1-3, the tractor is shown generally at 2. The tractor 2 is of the type of a four-wheel drive vehicle having front drive wheels 4, and rear drive wheels 6 which support a frame 8 of the tractor. The tractor 2 also includes a seat 10 for a single rider, having a backrest at 12 with a front utility rack 14 and a rear utility rack 16. The tractor is steerable by way of a steering assembly 18 and is motively projected by way of a drive train at 20 (FIG. 2).

With reference now to FIGS. 4-8, frame 8 is shown in greater detail. Frame 8 is generally comprised of a longitudinally extending upper frame portion 26 which is generally comprised of longitudinally extending frame members 28 held in a fixed relation by way of a crossbar 30. A lower frame member 32 is rigidly attached to the upper frame member 26 by way of frame uprights 34, 36 and 38. The tractor 2 also includes an enhanced rider area which is comprised of a seat height adjustment assembly shown generally at 40, a seat load compensation assembly shown generally at 42 and a backrest fore/aft assembly shown generally at 44 (FIG. 3).

With respect to FIGS. 8B and 19, a forward portion of frame 26 is shown, specifically frame members 28. Fuel tank 46 is attached to frame 26, by way of depending legs 48 attached to standoffs 49. Depending legs 48 extend rearwardly from standoffs in a cantilevered fashion, as described further herein.

With respect again to FIGS. 4-8, seat load compensation assembly 42 will be described in greater detail. Seat load compensation assembly 42 is generally comprised of a load frame 50, a coil spring assembly 52 and a spring retainer 54. With respect to FIGS. 4 and 5, frame 50 is shown comprised of side plate members 56 attached at one end to a rear bracket



58 and at the opposite end to a front plate 60. Front plate 60 also cooperates with the adjustable seat height assembly 40 as will be described herein. Frame 50 also includes a channel 62 which extends between plate 60 and bracket 58. Channel 60 is open on an underside thereof and includes attachment apertures 64 (FIG. 5) as described herein. As shown best in FIG. 5, frame 50 includes hinge plates 70 which are fixed to the bottom of plate members 56, and which flank a bushing 72. This allows frame 50 to be pivotally mounted on end tube 74 which spans between frame members 28. As should be appreciated, this allows the entire frame assembly 50 to pivot relative to the frame 8. Finally, and with respect to FIG. 4, front plate 60 includes a plurality of vertically spaced apertures 80, and an alignment block 82 as further described herein.

With respect again to FIGS. 4 and 5, spring retainer 54 includes a rear plate 90 and side plates 92 which terminate in side flanges 94 which in turn are attached to inside surfaces of frame members 28. With reference now to FIGS. 6 and 7, the mounting of spring 52 will be described in greater detail. Spring 52 is a compression spring and is shown trapped between a rear retainer 100 and a front retainer 102. Rear retainer 100 includes an enlarged portion 104, where the enlarged portion 104 has a larger profile than the outside diameter of the coil spring 52, and is positioned on the inside of spring retainer 54. The retainer 100 also includes an inside diameter portion 106 having a diameter smaller than the inside diameter of coil spring 52 to seat within the coil spring 52. Rear retainer 100 would also be attached to a jack screw 110 (see FIGS. 5 and 6), which when threaded through nut 112 pushes on rear retainer 100, and resultantly increases the compression spring force in coil spring 52.

With respect to FIGS. 7 and 8, upper retainer 102 includes an enlarged portion 110 having a larger profile than the coil spring 52 and a reduced diameter section 112 which has a smaller diameter than coil spring 52 and seats inside coil spring 52. It should be appreciated that enlarged portion 110 would include an anchor (not shown) having an aperture through which a pin may be attached to a rearward one of apertures 64 (FIGS. 4-5) to attach the top end of coil spring 52 to the center channel 62. It should be appreciated then that a downward force F (see FIG. 8) on a front portion of frame 50 allows frame 50 to pivot under spring force about tube 74 in the direction shown in the arrow as shown in FIG. 8. It should also be appreciated that the compressive spring force in spring 52 is controllable through jackscrew 110.

While spring retainer 54 is fixed, coil spring can pivot about retainer 100 during this pivotal movement. However, it also possible to mount spring retainer 54 in a rotatable sense relative to rear tube 120 or to fix spring retainer 50 to rear tube 120 and allow tube 120 to rotate relative to uprights 34.

With respect now to FIGS. 5 and 6, a dampening assembly is shown to comprise an upright 122 attached to the crossbar 30, with a channel 124 attached to upright 122. A shock or damper 126 is positioned between channel 124 and between apertures 64 in channel 62 (see FIG. 5).

With respect now to FIGS. 9-11, seat 10 will be described in greater detail. Seat 10 is comprised of a base portion 130 having a front section 132 and a rear section 134, with structural ribs 136 fastened therein and extending between the front and rear sections 132, 134. Ribs 136 are shown as riveted, but could be fixed by integral molding, adhesives, or other known fasteners. FIG. 9 shows seat 10 with the base portion 130 with the padding, whereas FIGS. 10 and 11 show only the base portion 130. Base portion 130 also includes a lower surface 138 having posts 140 extending therefrom having rubber stops at 142. As shown best in FIG. 9, seat base 130

is rigidified with steel ribs 144 attached to the posts 140. As shown in FIG. 9, base front 132 includes two openings 146 (only one of which is visible) positioned within molded pockets 148. Finally as shown in FIG. 11, seat frame 130 is equipped with a height adjustment latch assembly shown at 150.

With respect again to FIG. 4, seat adjusting latch 150 comprises a lever 152 having two pin portions 154 extending through a clevis jaw 156 where the clevis jaw has an upper portion 158 which flanks a molded portion 160 of seat frame 130. Pin portions 154 are fixedly attached to clevis jaws 156, and clevis jaws 156 rotate about an axis through pins 154 upon movement of handle 152. Clevis jaw 156 also includes a locking pawl 166 (FIG. 5) which locks with one of the apertures 80 in front plate 60. It should be appreciated that latch assembly 150 includes a torsional spring 168 such that the clevis jaw 156 is normally biased against the plate 60 with the pawls 166 in a locked condition within the apertures 80.

As also best shown in FIG. 4, seat frame 130 includes a recess 170 which aligns with and receives alignment block 82 to allow the seat to pivot upwardly and downwardly, but prevents movement of the seat frame 130 in a lateral sense. As shown best in FIG. 4, rubber stops 142 are aligned with frame members 28 to prevent hard engagement of the seat frame 130 with the frame members 28 in a jounce situation. Seat 10 is held in position with depending legs 48 positioned in openings 146 (see FIG. 8B), by block portion 82 positioned in opening 170 (see FIG. 4), and with latch assemblies 150 positioned within apertures 80 of plate 60.

As shown in FIGS. 12 and 13, the seat 10 may move through extreme positions A and B as measured from the utility rack 16. FIGS. 14-16 also show the seat position with the locking pawls 166 in the various apertures 80. As shown between the comparison of FIGS. 12 and 13, the seat has a vertical movement of 42.926 mm/1.69".

With respect to FIGS. 3 and 17, the seatback adjustment assembly 44 is comprised of tubular frame member 180 attached to seat back padding 182, and locking channels 190 fixedly attached to rear rack 16. Frame portion 180 also includes a horizontally extending portion 188 positioned within locking channels 190 which are locked by way of a threaded thumb wheel 192. It should be appreciated that when the thumb wheels 192 are loosened and retracted, the horizontal tube portions 188 may move forwardly and backwardly within the channels 190 to allow the user to position the seatback in a number of various locations, and can lock the seatback to any position between extreme positions. FIGS. 17 and 18 show those extreme positions, where the difference between positions C and D allows 60 mm of travel for the seat back.

As designed the tractor 2 meets all of the directives as mentioned above. The seat back moves forwards and backwards as disclosed in FIGS. 17-18. The seat also meets the seat load characteristics by providing the pivotal suspension frame 50 with the spring 52 loaded upon a force on the seat providing a variable reactive force. The spring rate of the spring as disclosed is 170 lb<sub>f</sub>/per inch of compression, which allows an approximate load variance for the embodiment shown, of between 155 N and 1200 N. The height variance is accomplished by interconnection of the end of the seat to the front end of the suspension frame 50.

With reference now to FIGS. 19-25, a speed control device for the tractor will be described. With reference first to FIG. 19, the tractor 2 is shown having an air intake system shown generally at 200 comprising an airbox 202, an air intake snorkel 204 connected to the airbox 202, a speed control unit 206 connected intermediate the airbox 202 and a throttle



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valve 208. It should be appreciated that the throttle valve is attached to the air intake of the engine of the tractor in a known manner.

With reference to FIG. 22, speed control unit 206 generally includes a speed control body shown generally at 210 with an intake side 212 connected to the airbox 202 and an exhaust side 214 connected to the throttle body 208. The speed control unit further includes a guillotine style gate 216 and a top cap 218 having an air input nipple 220. With reference now to FIGS. 23 and 24, the speed control unit is shown in an exploded manner and, in addition, shows an inner housing insert 222.

As shown in FIG. 24, speed control body 210 includes a central body portion 224 which fluidly communicates with an open upper area 226 which is surrounded by a flange 228. Insert 222 is receivable into the central body portion 224 and into the position as shown in FIG. 22. Insert 222 together with housing 210 define an air channel 230 between intake side 212 and exhaust side 214. As best shown in FIG. 22, control body 210 includes a raised section or "tongue" shown at 230. The raised section 230 is only on one side (the intake side 212) and only extends up to the guillotine gate member 216 as described further herein. Insert 222 is fixedly receivable within central body portion 224 by way of a pair of fasteners 236. As best shown in FIG. 23, insert 222 includes an inner profile 238 having an H-shaped channel as described further herein.

Meanwhile diaphragm assembly 216 includes a guillotine gate valve member 240 attached to a diaphragm 242 where the guillotine valve member 240 has an H-shaped configuration cooperable with opening 238 and is receivable therein and movable upwardly and downwardly transversely of the opening 230. It should also be appreciated that the diaphragm 242 seats on top of opening 226 of the body 210 and that the guillotine valve member 240 is movable upwardly and downwardly within the insert 222 based upon the position of the center of the diaphragm.

The cap 218 is fastened to the top of the body 210 by way of fasteners 243 which are received through apertures of cap 218 and are received in apertures 244 of body 210. This forms a sealed condition around the periphery of opening 226 by way of the diaphragm. A spring 250 and cap 252 are positioned between diaphragm 242 and cap 218 such that the guillotine valve member 240 is normally spring-loaded to a position where the guillotine forms a closed condition within the opening. As also shown in FIG. 23, diaphragm member 216 includes a bleed hole 260 which extends through the guillotine 240 and upwardly through the diaphragm 242 as further described herein. A first pressure chamber is defined under the cap 218 and above the diaphragm, and a second pressure chamber is defined beneath the diaphragm.

Raised section 230 allows for minimal air turbulence entering the throttle. Due to the flat bottom shape of the guillotine valve member 240, the valve member provides a clean conformance with the raised section, to close off the air flow when the guillotine valve member 240 is fully down. There is a certain amount of air leakage that goes through and there is the defined leakage through orifice 260, which preferably is a 1.27 mm hole. This orifice provides the defined leakage as well as a damping effect to the guillotine valve member movement in the up and down direction.

With reference now to FIGS. 25A and 25B, the operation of speed control device 206 will be described in greater detail. First with respect to controlling the speed, it should be appreciated that any particular speed limit may be set as an upper range but in this particular example, the speed is set to control at a top end speed of 25 mph.

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As shown in FIG. 25A, a speed pickup is shown diagrammatically at 270 and this speed pickup could take many different configurations. However, for example, in this embodiment the speed pickup is a Hall Effect sensor located adjacent to the rear wheels which pick up signals from the wheel speed and delivers that information to an engine control unit 272. The engine control unit 272 is also in communication with a solenoid valve 274 which in turn is connected to nipple 220 by a hose 276. Vehicle speed is fed to the engine control unit 272. Solenoid 274 and hose 276 can allow atmospheric pressure into the top of the speed control unit 206, and to the topside of diaphragm 242 when opened.

In the embodiment of FIG. 25A, the tractor is assumed to be operating at a speed of less than 25 mph. This information is fed to engine control unit 272, which closes solenoid valve 274. When the operator tries to increase speed, the engine will create a vacuum pressure P1 on the engine side of speed control unit 206. The pressure on the opposite side of speed control unit 206 P2 (FIG. 25A) is greater, and therefore the greater pressure P2 act on the bottom side of the diaphragm 242 and raises it upwardly. Air on the topside of the diaphragm 242 is allowed to bleed through bleed hole 260 (FIG. 23).

If the tractor comes to a speed of 25 mph or greater, and as shown in FIG. 25B, the speed pick up 270 senses that condition and sends a message to engine control unit 272 that the operational speed is greater than 25 mph. The engine control unit 272 then sends a signal to solenoid valve 274 which allows atmospheric air through hose 276 and allows atmospheric pressure through nipple 220. This places a force on the backside of diaphragm 242 in the direction of the arrow shown in FIG. 25B. This closes the diaphragm and moves the guillotine valve member 240 to its most restrictive position and therefore starves the engine of air.

This condition makes the engine control unit believe that it is at a different operating condition (for example, a higher altitude condition) and therefore, also adjusts such other operating conditions such as fuel input. The net result of the speed control unit 206 is the vehicle speed is reduced to a speed at or below 25 mph. The bleed hole 260 allows smooth acceleration and deceleration without jerky motion.

While this invention has been described as having an exemplary design, the present invention may be further modified within the spirit and scope of this disclosure. The application is, therefore, intended to cover any variations, uses, or adaptations of the invention using its general principles. Further, this application is intended to cover such departures from the present disclosure as come within known or customary practice in the art to which this invention pertains.

What is claimed is:

1. An all terrain vehicle (ATV), comprising:
  - a vehicle frame;
  - a seat pivotally mounted relative to the frame at a pivot position adjacent a front of the seat;
  - a seat load compensation assembly comprising a load frame which is pivotally mounted relative to the vehicle frame and connected to a rear portion of the seat, the seat load compensation assembly providing a reactive force on the seat; and
  - a seat height adjusting mechanism, whereby the seat may be inclined about the pivot position relative to the vehicle frame and held at a different inclined height by way of the seat height adjusting mechanism;
 wherein the reactive force on the seat may be modified for different drivers.



2. The ATV of claim 1, wherein a rear portion of the load frame is pivotally mounted to the vehicle frame, the rear portion of the load frame extending forwardly towards the seat.

3. The ATV of claim 2, wherein the seat height adjusting mechanism comprises a latching jaw which cooperates with latching elements.

4. The ATV of claim 3, wherein the seat height adjusting mechanism cooperates with the seat load compensation assembly in order to vary one or both of, the seat height and the reactive load on the seat.

5. The ATV of claim 4, wherein the seat and the load frame intersect at the seat height adjusting mechanism.

6. The ATV of claim 5, wherein the seat height adjusting mechanism comprises a latching jaw, and the load frame comprises latching elements.

7. The ATV of claim 6, wherein the latching jaw is in the form of a pawl.

8. The ATV of claim 6, wherein the latching elements are located in a plate mounted relative to the vehicle frame.

9. The ATV of claim 8, wherein the seat height adjusting mechanism comprises a plurality of latching jaws connected to a lever, where the lever moves the latching jaws out of a latched position.

10. The ATV of claim 9, wherein the latching elements are located in the plate, and the plate is mounted to a front of the load frame.

11. The ATV of claim 6, wherein the seat load compensation assembly comprises one of a coil spring or damper, positioned between the vehicle frame and the load frame.

12. The ATV of claim 11, wherein the seat load compensation assembly comprises a spring load adjustment mechanism.

13. The ATV of claim 12, wherein the latching jaw is connected to a lever positioned adjacent to a rear of the seat.

14. The ATV of claim 13, further comprising a rear utility rack mounted rearward of the seat, the utility rack being positioned above and substantially covering the load frame, and the lever and the spring load adjustment mechanism being accessible with the utility rack in place.

15. An all terrain vehicle (ATV), comprising:  
 a vehicle frame;  
 a seat pivotally mounted relative to the frame at a pivot position adjacent a front of the seat; and  
 a seat load compensation assembly comprising a load frame which is pivotally coupled to the vehicle frame and coupled to the seat to provide a reactive force on the seat;

wherein the reactive force on the seat may be modified for different drivers.

16. The ATV of claim 15, wherein a rear portion of the load frame is pivotally mounted to the vehicle frame, the rear portion of the load frame extending forwardly towards the seat.

17. The ATV of claim 16, further comprising a seat height adjusting mechanism, whereby the seat may be inclined about the pivot position relative to the vehicle frame and held at a different inclined height by way of the seat height adjusting mechanism.

18. The ATV of claim 17, wherein the seat height adjusting mechanism comprises a latching jaw which cooperates with latching elements.

19. The ATV of claim 18, wherein the seat height adjusting mechanism cooperates with the seat load compensation assembly in order to vary one or both of, the seat height and the reactive load on the seat.

20. The ATV of claim 19, wherein the seat and the load frame intersect at the seat height adjusting mechanism.

21. The ATV of claim 20, wherein the seat height adjusting mechanism comprises a latching jaw and the load frame comprises latching elements.

22. The ATV of claim 21, wherein the latching jaw is in the form of a pawl.

23. The ATV of claim 21, wherein the latching elements are located in a plate mounted relative to the vehicle frame.

24. The ATV of claim 23, wherein the seat height adjusting mechanism comprises a plurality of latching jaws connected to a lever, where the lever moves the latching jaws out of a latched position.

25. The ATV of claim 24, wherein the latching elements are located in the plate, and the plate is mounted to a front of the load frame.

26. The ATV of claim 21, wherein the seat load compensation assembly comprises one of a coil spring or damper, positioned between the vehicle frame and the load frame.

27. The ATV of claim 26, wherein the seat load compensation assembly comprises a spring load adjustment mechanism.

28. The ATV of claim 27, wherein the latching jaw is connected to a lever positioned adjacent to a rear of the seat.

29. The ATV of claim 28, further comprising a rear utility rack mounted rearward of the seat, the utility rack being positioned above and substantially covering the load frame, and the lever and the spring load adjustment mechanism being accessible with the utility rack in place.

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